

The Salted Sacrifice

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"For every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt. Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his saltness, wherewith will ye season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another." Mark 9:49, 50

In endeavouring to ascertain the mind and meaning of the blessed Spirit in the word of truth, it is very desirable, and in some cases absolutely indispensable, to consider what is commonly called the context; that is, what precedes and what follows the text. For want of attending to this rule, men have sometimes sadly misunderstood and misapplied the word of God. To explain more clearly my meaning, I will give you two instances of this misapplication. Writing to the Corinthians, the Apostle says, "Nevertheless, being crafty, I caught you with guile." (2 Cor. 12:16.) I have sometimes heard that passage interpreted as if the apostle really meant that he was crafty, and that he had actually caught them with guile; from which this most unwarrantable inference has been drawn that craft in religion is occasionally allowable, so that if you cannot catch people by fair means you may do it by foul. Now nothing can be further than such a meaning or such an inference from the mind of the Spirit, and nothing more contrary both to the Spirit and practice of the apostle. The words that he there uses are not meant to express his own spirit or conduct, but are put by him into the mouth of an objector. His object in writing as he does to the Corinthians in that and the preceding chapter was to show how disinterested he had been in all his conduct towards them; that he neither had nor would be "burdensome to

them," for he sought not theirs, but them, not their gifts, but their graces, not their money but their souls. But he introduces an objector. Well, be it so, I did not burden you. Let it be granted that I acted so far, disinterestedly. But was there no ulterior object in all this, no secret craft in all my apparent disinterestedness so as to catch you by guile, as if I would do by another what I would not do myself? This objection he at once answers: "Did I make a gain of you by any of them whom I sent unto you? I desired Titus, and with him I sent a brother. Did Titus make a gain of you? walked we not in the same spirit? walked we not in the same steps?" (2 Cor. 12:17, 18.) By thus appealing to the conduct of Titus and a brother he repels the accusation of having caught them by guile, for he would not craftily employ others to do what he would not do openly himself. When we thus look at the context, we see in a moment how wrong is the interpretation that Paul actually used craft, and caught the Corinthians with guile and deception.

Now let me give you another instance of a similar misinterpretation of a passage from not considering the context. The apostle, writing to the Corinthians, says, "Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God." (1 Cor 10:32.) I have heard this passage applied to the lukewarm, neutral ministry of the day, as if it meant that a man might so preach as to give offence "neither to Jew nor Gentile, nor to the church of God," and that such preaching as offends nobody was by it condemned as destitute of all point and all faithfulness. Now, if we look at the context, we shall see that the apostle is not speaking about preaching at all, but of Christian walk and conduct, especially in eating or not eating meats offered to idols. He therefore says, "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. Give none offence;" put not a stumbling block in the way of anyone;

"neither to the Jews"—put no stumbling block in their way; "nor to the Gentiles"—put no stumbling block in their way; "nor to the church of God"—put no stumbling block in its way. I might name other instances, but I have said enough to show how from not taking a view of the context, men may totally misunderstand and sadly misapply the word of truth.

But you may say, perhaps, "You are talking about connection, but what connection has all this with the words of your text?" I will show you. Did not the text strike you, when I gave it out, as having something strange and mysterious in it? Being "salted with fire," and the sacrifice being "salted with salt"—was there not something to you in the very sound of the words that appeared extraordinary and difficult of comprehension? Well, perhaps it may help us to understand the meaning of this difficult and mysterious text if we look shortly at the context, trace the connection, so as to gather up some consistent idea of our Lord's meaning, for he speaks here. And it will be our wisdom and mercy if we can not only understand but give heed to his words of grace and truth, for surely no man ever spake like this man.

In the preceding verses, then, the Lord had been speaking of matters of offence, that is, stumbling blocks, over which we might fall into evil: "And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched." (Mark 9:43.) The hand here is used typically and figuratively of an instrument of evil, whether of violence, or theft, or any other sin which may be perpetrated by it. If, then, says the Lord, thy hand be to thee a minister of evil, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched. The Lord does not mean that we are to lay our hand literally down upon a block or chop it off with axe or

hatchet; but that we are to do that violence to our sins, to our inclinations, to our tempers, and to our lusts, as we should do literally to our hand if we were to cut it off at a stroke. So, "if thy foot offend thee," be to thee a cause of stumbling—and the foot here signifies those deviations from the straight and narrow path, whether into unbelief or into error, or any other departure from the way of truth and righteousness to which we are prone—"if thy foot offend thee," do what? "Cut it off." Do to it as to the hand: "It is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched." Then comes the solemn iteration, "Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." "And if thine eye"—that inlet to evil, whether to covetousness, as in the case of Achan, or sinful lusts, as in the case of David;—if thine eye cause thee to offend, pluck it out—not literally. If you could tear it out and trample it under foot, as so much "vile jelly," as one of our poets calls it, that would not pluck out the lust which is seated far beyond our reach, and would still exist in all its vigour, making to itself an eye of imagination when the eye of sense was gone. No, the Lord does not bid us injure the eye, which can read the word of truth and guide us upon errands of mercy and love, as well as be an inlet to evil. He would have us spare the eye, but not spare the lust which is in the eye, but do it as much violence as you would do to the literal eye if you tore it from the socket. "It is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire." Then again comes for the third time that solemn iteration, which someone has well called "an emphasis of terror:" "Where their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched." What worm but the worm of a guilty conscience that ever feeds upon the never-dying soul? What fire but the eternal fire of God's displeasure, which no remorse will ever quench? Now come the words of our text: "For every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice

shall be salted with salt." What is the connection between these words and those which I have just been explaining? I believe this. The worm is a type of corruption, as feeding upon it; the fire is a representation of the anger of God, who is a consuming fire. From this corruption you must be preserved by salt; from this fire you must be delivered by being salted with fire. If you die in your sins, unsalted, unseasoned, the undying worm of remorse, bred from your corruptions, will ever gnaw your guilty conscience. Unless salted with fire, you will not be preserved from that corruption which is in the world through lust, and which, if not delivered from it, would plunge body and soul into the lake of fire.

But not only must you be salted, but your *sacrifices* also. Every sacrifice, to be acceptable with God, must be salted with salt. Following up this connection, our Lord then says, "Salt is good:" but he adds a solemn caveat that even when salted the salt may not be permanent; and then where is the remedy? "If the salt have lost his saltness, wherewith will ye season it?" He then closes the whole with a gracious exhortation: "Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another."

In endeavouring to open up the mind and meaning of our blessed Lord here, as I have thus simply sketched it, I shall,

I.—*First*, show you, from his own words, *the goodness of salt*. "Salt is good," and in *what* that *goodness* consists.

II.—*Secondly*, *the salting of the sacrificer*: "Every one shall be salted with fire."

III.—*Thirdly*, *the salting of the sacrifice*: "Every sacrifice shall be salted with salt."

IV.—*Fourthly, the case assumed:* "If the salt have lost his saltness, wherewith will ye season it?"

V.—*Lastly, the exhortation:* "Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another."

I.—The goodness of salt: "Salt is good." How is salt good? Literally and figuratively, naturally and spiritually. We will look at both the cases in which we have assumed the goodness of salt.

i. Why is salt good literally? What is the salient point, the most prominent feature of its goodness? It is an efficient *preservative from corruption*. There is a tendency in everything here below to decay. Life, whether vegetable or animal, is ever tending towards death. It seems like a law impressed upon every living thing, that as soon as born it hastens to die; and with death immediately begins corruption. In spring, how green the leaf! but when death touches the stalk, and it drops from the autumnal bough, how soon reduced to rottenness and dust! How active and energetic are body and soul of man in a state of health and strength. But let death strike the fatal dart, how corruption at once lays hold of the human frame, and the stouter and stronger the body the quicker and more immediate its effects. Thus there is a natural tendency to corruption in everything here below, for nothing seems to escape the gnawing tooth of time. Dissolution, decay, and corruption press hard upon life, and unceasingly dog its every footstep. But there is an antidote against corruption, and that is *salt*. To illustrate this, let me bring before you two or three familiar instances:—

1. First cast your eyes over that wide-spread ocean, which

covers perhaps nearly three-fourths of this globe. What would it be without salt? A seething mass of corruption. But God has well and thoroughly salted it, and has thus preserved it from being what else it would be—a mass of putrid water, spreading desolation over the earth.

2. Our very bodies as now constituted must have salt in them, or even life itself would not keep them from corruption. "Salt in our bodies?" say you; "what do you mean by that? Have we salt in our flesh?" Let me give you two simple proofs of it. When the harvestman is engaged in the field, reaping the corn or loading the wain, how salty are the drops of sweat which fall like so many beads from his manly brow! When the poor widow sits beside her husband's corpse, how briny the tears that roll down her cheek! Are these not plain evidences that we must have salt in our bodies, salt in our blood, or why are sweat and tears so salty which are formed out of the blood? Yes, the very salt in our bodies, which he who made us has put into us, keeps them from corruption.

3. But I will give you one more proof of which perhaps you have never heard. There was a punishment formerly inflicted upon criminals in Holland of this nature. When condemned to death, the prisoner was taken back to his cell, and debarred of all salt to his food. Not a single grain was allowed to enter into anything which he ate or drank. What was the consequence? In a short time worms bred in his inside, and he miserably perished by a slow and lingering death, every part of his body full of corruption.

4. But take the familiar instance of preserving meat. Is not that preserved from corruption by salt? Salted meat is familiar to us all as arrested from corruption by the entrance of salt into every part and pore.

Now look at this in a spiritual sense. Unless we have something rubbed as it were into us to preserve the soul from corruption, will it not perish in its lusts, and be thus for ever unfit to enter into the glorious presence of a holy God? How good, then, must salt be in a spiritual sense to preserve our souls from becoming here and hereafter a loathsome mass of corruption and putrefaction! I shall show you by and by how the Lord uses fire instead of salt thus to save and purify the soul. But take this first as the leading idea of salt, that it is an antidote against corruption. I may observe here that in a figure it is always well to catch the leading idea, as that not only enables us to see the mind and meaning of the Spirit prominently therein, but casts also a ray of light on secondary and subsidiary meanings.

ii. But salt is good in another sense: *it gives savour and flavour* to our daily food. Job asks, "Can that which is unsavoury be eaten without salt? or is there any taste in the white of an egg?" (Job. 6:6.) From the banquet of kings to the poor widow's cold potato, salt is on the table: food would be flavourless without it. In the interior of Africa salt is extremely scarce—so scarce that you may almost buy a slave for a handful of it. Children there will run for miles after the traveller for a few grains of salt, which if they get they will suck with as much relish as children here the richest confections made from sugar. In this sense, perhaps, the Lord said to his disciples, "Ye are the salt of the earth" (Matt. 5:13), meaning thereby that by them was the earth not only preserved from corruption, but even by their presence upon it was made to have flavour and savour before God, and thus be acceptable before him.

iii. But take another idea of the figure, closely indeed allied to the first, viz., *health*. I have shown you before that the

presence of salt in our bodies is indispensable to a state of health, and that the absence of it engenders disease and death. What salt is to the body that grace is to the soul. "Have salt in yourselves," the Lord says in our text, that is, "have the grace of God in your hearts"; for without this there is neither life nor health. So holy John, writing to his well-beloved Gaius, breathes for him this prayer: "Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth." (3 John 2.) But without grace there can be neither soul health nor soul prosperity.

iv. But take now another meaning of the emblem, which is more especially a Scriptural one, that of *perpetuity*. We read in the Scripture sometimes of a "covenant of salt." "Ought ye not to know that the Lord God of Israel gave the kingdom over Israel to David for ever, even to him and to his sons, by a "covenant of salt?" (2 Chron. 13:5.) And again, "All the heave offerings of the holy things, which the children of Israel offer unto the Lord, have I given thee, and thy sons and thy daughters with thee, by a statute forever: it is a covenant of salt for ever before the Lord unto thee and to thy seed with thee." (Numbers 18:19.) A covenant of salt signifies a covenant which never can be broken, for as salt is a natural preservation from corruption, it became an emblem of perpetuity and lasting endurance.

v. But I must name one more meaning of the figure salt. It is an emblem of *friendship and peace*. As such, even to this day in Oriental climes, salt becomes, when eaten between two parties, a token of friendship; and I understand that the wild Arab will never plunder or ill use the traveller with whom he has eaten salt. I have read a remarkable anecdote to illustrate this. A robber once broke into the palace of a prince, and having collected a very large booty was on the point of carrying it away, when he struck his foot against

something on the ground. Stooping in the dark to touch it, and then tasting his fingers, he found it was a lump of salt. He was so struck with having eaten salt in the house of his victim, that at once he fled away, leaving all his booty behind. Salt thus being an emblem of peace, our Lord said in the text, "Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another."

II.—Now let us carry these leading ideas of salt into that part of our subject which we proposed to consider in the second place; I mean *the salting of the sacrificer*; "Every one shall be salted with fire."

i. I showed you in my introduction, that there must be an operation of God's grace upon our heart to preserve us from the fire that is not quenched, and that this was by salting the soul with fire; the fire being used in the hands of the Spirit to produce that spiritual effect which I have explained to you salt sets forth in emblem and figure. The soul has to be preserved from corruption—from the worm that dieth not; to have savour and flavour before the Lord; to be made and kept healthy and prosperous; to enjoy a perpetuity of God's favour; and to be blessed with his friendship and peace. Now that these blessings may be brought about, it must be salted and that by fire. Let us now then view the various ways, for there are more than one, by which it is thus salted.

1. There is, for instance, *the law*, which the Scripture calls a fiery law. "The Lord came from Sinai; from his right hand went a fiery law for them." (Deut. 23:2.) We know that when it was given, Mount Sinai "was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire" (Exodus 19:18); and again, "And the Lord spake unto you out of the midst of the fire." (Deut. 4:12.) But why is it called "a *fiery* law?" Because therein is manifested the eternal indignation of God,

who is a consuming fire. But it is a fiery law, not only in its first manifestation, but in its application to the conscience, for it burns up and consumes all creature righteousness, the wood, hay, and stubble of all human merit. But it also sets fire to our corruptions, making them blaze up and burn with greater strength and fury, as the apostle found: "For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sin, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death." "But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead." (Rom. 7:5, 8.) For these three reasons, its manifestation, its application, and its conflagration, the law may well be called "a fiery law."

But the question may arise, How is the soul salted by the law? In this way. By its application it is preserved from perishing in the corruption of sin or the corruption of self-righteousness, for the fire it kindles acts in the soul as salt does literally in the body, or as used to preserve meats from spoiling. It delivers the soul from the corruptions of the world; it burns up all creature righteousness, wisdom, and strength, and thus instrumentally preserves it from sinking under the wrath of God, either as laden with all the guilt and weight of a nature corrupt to the very core, or as clothed in a righteousness which he can never accept, as stained and dyed with all our native filth and folly. The law indeed does not sanctify the heart nor purge the conscience, but instrumentally it salts the soul from perishing in its corruptions. It also gives savour and flavour to a man's prayers and conversation; communicates a healthy appetite for the food of the gospel; is a needful preliminary for a knowledge of the everlasting covenant; and leads the way into a state of peace and friendship with God.

2. But take another way in which the sacrificer is salted with

fire. There is *the fiery trial* of which Peter speaks: "Think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you." (1 Pet. 5:12.) The "fiery trial," then, is not a strange thing which happens only to a few of the Lord's family, but is more or less the appointed lot of all. Do we not hear the Lord saying to his Zion: "I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction?" (Isa. 48:10.) All, then, that are chosen must pass through the furnace of affliction, and all know experimentally the fiery trial, for by it they are made "partakers of Christ's sufferings." But this is indispensable in order to be partakers of his glory. "If so be that we suffer with him that we may be also glorified together." (Rom. 8:17.) Thus they suffer with him, "that when his glory shall be revealed they may be glad also with exceeding joy." But this suffering with and for Christ in the furnace of affliction salts the soul; preserves it from corruption; communicates health; gives it savour and flavour; is a token of interest in the everlasting covenant; and is a seal of friendship and peace with God.

3. But there is another fire with which you must be salted—*the fire of temptation*. Temptation is to the corruptions of the heart what fire is to stubble. Sin lies quiet in our carnal mind till temptation comes to set it on fire. There is not a single sin ever uttered by the lips or perpetrated by the hand of man which does not lie deeply hidden in the recesses of our fallen nature; but they do not stir into activity until temptation draws them forth. Well then did the Lord bid his disciples pray: "Lead us not into temptation" (Matt. 6:13); and again, "Pray that ye enter not into temptation" (Luke 22:40); for temptation is to our corrupt nature as the spark to gunpowder. Have you not found this sad truth, how easily by it are the corruptions of our wretched heart on fire, in enmity, rebellion, unbelief, infidelity, and every kind of daring and dreadful iniquity which I shall forbear to name?

But the question may well arise, How can this fire of temptation salt the sacrificer? Why, in temptation we learn what sin is, its dreadful nature, its aggravated character, its fearful workings, its mad, its desperate upheavings against the Majesty of heaven, and what we are or should be were we left wholly in its hands. The pungent salt of temptation enters into the smarting pores of our conscience, salting it as with fire, and making it sore and tender. By the workings of this tender conscience under temptation we are delivered from becoming a prey to corruption either of sin or of self-righteousness; life and power are put into our prayers; savour and flavour into our words and works; and a clear separation made between faith and unbelief—the strength of the creature and the strength of the Lord—what we are by nature and what we are by grace.

4. But *the word of God* also is compared to fire. "Is not my word like as a fire, saith the Lord?" (Jer. 23:29.) So the Lord speaking of his word which he would send forth after his resurrection, says, "I am come to send fire on the earth, and what will I if it be already kindled?" The word of the Lord is compared to fire, as being quick and piercing, penetrating into men's hearts and consciences. It is therefore said by the apostle to be "sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow." (Heb. 4:12.) Of Joseph also when in prison we read that "the word of the Lord tried him." (Psa. 105:19.) The word of truth when applied to the heart with divine power tries the family of God, whether they be right or wrong, whether they possess the fear of God or not. It is thus sometimes as "a burning fire shut up in their bones" (Jer. 20:9), salting them to the very depth of their conscience, and trying every part of the experience to the very quick. But by this fire the child of God is well salted, for

by it he is preserved from corruption in doctrine, experience, lip, or life. By it also he is made acceptable to the family of God, for there is in his conversation a savour and a flavour which a salting fire alone can communicate. By it, too, health is communicated, for the word of salvation brings with it health and cure; and by the power of the word in the promises he also enters into the blessedness of a covenant of salt, and finds peace and friendship with God.

5. But there is one more fire of which I must speak, as salting the sacrificer, and that is the most blessed salt which can enter into his soul—*the love of God* shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost. This comes down from heaven into the soul, as the fire fell upon the brazen altar, and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices when Solomon dedicated the temple (2 Chron. 7:1); or as the blessed Spirit came down upon the apostles when they were baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire on the day of Pentecost. No fire that salts the soul can be compared to this for power and efficacy, for it inflames every holy, tender, and gracious affection, lifts up the heart to where Jesus sits at the right hand of God, and, whilst it enkindles every affectionate desire of the bosom, burns as in a holy flame of jealousy against everything that God abhors. Thus the apostle, speaking of the effects of godly sorrow for sin, says, "Yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge" it wrought in you. (2 Cor. 7:11.) Does not this fire of love and sorrow, love to God and sorrow for sin, well salt the child of grace? Speaking of the outcast babe in Ezekiel, the Lord says, "Thou wast not salted at all." No, for "none eye pitied thee, to do any of these unto thee." (Ezekiel 16:4,.5.) But the Lord of his infinite grace and boundless compassion, salts the babe of grace when he spreads his skirt over it.

We have seen, then, how by these different fires the child of God is salted, and we have also seen how by means of them he is preserved from the corruption that is in the world through lust; from the corruption of his own hypocritical heart; and from corruption in doctrine, in experience, and in practice: for none of these corruptions can live in the fire either of wrath or love. For "the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is" (1 Cor. 3:13): and as nothing carnal, hypocritical, or self-righteous can stand the flame, the believer comes out of them all like gold tried in the fire—his dross and tin purged away "by the spirit of judgment and the spirit of burning." (Isai. 4:4.)

ii. But I showed you also that salt gave *savour and favour* to the most tasteless food; in fact, that food could not be tasty or relishable without it. So it is with God's people: it is by the fire with which they are salted that there is a savour and flavour communicated to them, which cannot be obtained by any other means. What substitute can you find for salt to make your food wholesome and savoury? What substitute can you find for grace, especially grace tried in the fire, to flavour your soul and make it savoury to God and man? I shall show you this more at large when I come to the salting of the sacrifice. I am now showing the salting of the sacrificer; for we are to offer *ourselves* living sacrifices unto God as well as our offerings, and both we and they are only acceptable as salted with this salt, to give us savour and flavour at his altar.

iii. But salt, I before intimated, was an emblem of a *covenant*, and that one of *perpetual endurance*. The Lord has made a covenant with his dear Son on behalf of this people, and this is a covenant of perpetuity, never to be broken, but to endure for ever and ever. But this covenant has "bonds" into which we are to be brought. "And I will cause you to

pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant." (Ezek. 20:37.) This is eating the king's salt, or being "salted with the salt of the palace" (Ezra 4:14); for when in the East parties ate salt together, it was a token of a covenant between them. Thus in India it was a common phrase among the Sepoys, or soldiers of the old Indian army, that "they had eaten the Company's salt," and were thus bound to be faithful to their engagements. When, then, we taste the fire we are salted with the King's salt, and are thus brought into the bond of the covenant.

iv. But this covenant is also a covenant of *peace*. "My covenant with him was of life and peace" (Matt. 2:5); and thus, by eating the salt of the covenant, he is brought into a state of reconciliation, by which he obtains peace and amity with God. We read of "the blood of the everlasting covenant," and this covenant is a covenant of peace; for peace is the fruit of it, peace the substance of it, and peace the blessed effect of it.

III.—But now, to come to our next point, not only is the sacrificer to be salted with fire, but *the sacrifice also is to be salted with salt*. Are not these the Lord's own words, "For every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt?" There is an allusion here to the command of God given by Moses, that with all their offering they should offer salt. (Lev. 2:15.) There was an express prohibition of two things to be offered under the law—leaven and honey, at least, in the offerings which were made by fire (Lev. 2:11); and no doubt there was a spiritual significance in this prohibition, for "leaven" typically signifies malice and wickedness as well as hypocrisy; and "honey" is a symbol of sin and sinful pleasures. Neither, then, of these was to be offered in any offering of the Lord made by fire, though honey might be offered among the first fruits; but salt never

was to be lacking. I have already shown you the typical and figurative meaning of salt—that it preserves from corruption; gives food savour and flavour; is an emblem of a perpetual covenant; and is a figure of amity and peace. With salt, then, as emblematic of these fruits of the Spirit, was every sacrifice to be seasoned. But now let us look at the various sacrifices which the salted sacrificer has to offer.

i. Which is the first? *Himself*. Does not the apostle say, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service?" (Rom. 12:1.) But in presenting his body, the sacrificer has to present with it his soul; for he might give his body to be burned and yet unless there were love in his heart it would profit him nothing. (1 Cor. 13:3.) It is to be also "a living sacrifice," that it may be "holy and acceptable unto God;" and if it be a living sacrifice, there must surely be life in the soul of the sacrificer. When, then, and how does he present this living sacrifice? When he sacrifices his lusts, his passions, his inclinations, his darling projects, and all his most cherished schemes of worldly happiness and pleasure, and lays them down at Christ's feet as immolated, so to speak, by his own hand. The grace, which enables him to make these sacrifices, salts them, puts savour into them, preserves them from the stench of self, and makes them acceptable to God. Here we trace the connection between the salted sacrificer and the salted sacrifice. The Lord says, "If thine eye, or thy hand, or thy foot offend thee, cut it off." "But, Lord," you say, "can I make such a sacrifice? Can I sacrifice my hand, or my foot, or my eye, or," to come to things more intelligible, "my darling lusts? Can I sacrifice my fond inclinations, my ambitious projects, my darling schemes of rising in the world, and all that my carnal heart desires, and all this with my own hand? Must I do with them, and to them all as thou biddest

me,—cut them off and cast them from me? I cannot do it. It is a task beyond my power." But when the sacrificer has been salted with fire; when he knows something of a fiery law burning up his creature righteousness; something of the fiery trial that separates the dross from the tin; something of the fire of temptation inflaming all the combustible material of his carnal mind; something of the fire of God's word trying him to the very quick; and, above all, something of the love of God descending from heaven as a holy fire into his bosom, then he can make the sacrifice, yes, any sacrifice. We see, therefore, that the sacrificer cannot offer the sacrifice until he himself has been salted with fire; for, till then, he has neither will nor power. But his being salted with fire enables him to offer the sacrifice; for the fire purifies him from the corruptions of self, and endues him with spiritual strength.

But there is one point which I wish here most particularly to insist upon, lest my meaning be misapprehended. The *ground* of acceptance is one thing; the *state* of acceptance is another. The *ground* of acceptance is the blood and righteousness of the Son of God; the *state* of acceptance is sanctification by the work of the Holy Ghost. These two things are brought together by the apostle, "And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." (1 Cor. 6:11.) It is an indispensable preliminary to all spiritual worship, that the person of the worshipper must be accepted before the offering can be acceptable. The worshipper is accepted as being washed in the blood and clothed in the obedience of the Son of God; that is his real, his only ground of acceptance. But when he comes as a sacrificer, the spiritual worshipper must not only be accepted as standing in the blood and obedience of Jesus, but he must have that work of God upon his heart whereby he stands before him as a priest to offer sacrifice. The

apostle, therefore, says of the saints of God that they are "a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." (1 Pet. 2:5.) But in order to be priests, they themselves must be salted with fire, and thereby consecrated to the service of God, as was Aaron, when the blood of the bullock offered as a burnt sacrifice unto the Lord was put upon the tip of his right ear, and the thumb of his right hand, and the great toe of his right foot. He was thus consecrated by blood; and when Moses took of the anointing oil, a type of the sanctifying operations of the Holy Spirit, he was consecrated also by oil. So now by blood and oil is the sacrificer consecrated—the blood of the Lamb, and the unction of the Holy Ghost. This, then, is the reason why the Lord salts the sacrificer, that when he comes before the throne with a sacrifice, he may not offer strange fire nor stand before the Lord a profane wretch, without any spiritual offering in his hand, or any spiritual desire in his heart, which is in the sight of God no better than offering swine's blood upon his altar, or having broth of abominable things in his vessel. (Isa. 65:4, 66:3.) But he is to come before the Lord not only washed in the blood and clothed in the obedience of Christ, but as a spiritual worshipper, for the Father seeketh such to worship him; and if he be a spiritual worshipper, he must have been divinely made so as having been salted with fire. Now, then, he comes before the Lord with his first acceptable sacrifice, which is *himself*. Does not the apostle say, "Ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's." (1 Cor. 6:20.) Do not both belong to him? Are they not his? Can you call them your own? Then when you give them to the Lord you must still say with David, "Of thine own have we given thee, for all is thine own." (1 Chron. 29:14, 16.) Have you never been able to do this, to present your body and soul before the Lord as a sacrifice that he would take you and make you what he would have you to be? First present yourself and

then present your offering. But do we not see now more clearly the necessity of being salted with fire, and of the sacrifice being salted with salt, that you may offer an acceptable offering? For a man may present before God a sacrifice, and that sacrifice not be accepted, as not salted. The Lord gave a special charge to the children of Israel, to which I have before alluded, that salt was never to be lacking from the offering. "Every oblation of thy meat offering shalt thou season with salt; neither shalt thou suffer the salt of the covenant of thy God to be lacking from thy meat offering: with all thine offerings thou shalt offer salt." (Lev. 2:13.) A man may offer a sacrifice without salt. How many ministers have left the church of England and gone over to Popery! They have made, in so doing, the greatest possible sacrifices—sacrifices, perhaps, of which you are little aware, but which I well know, as having personally known in former days some of the men and something of their position—men of learning, amiability, family, and every prospect before them in life. Great was their sacrifice, but we should deny our firmest convictions if we believed that they or it were salted with salt. How many young women again of rank and family, in the prime of life, with bright prospects before them, courted, and admired by the world, and possessed of everything which could please and gratify the female heart, have given all up and gone into a nunnery, there to endure the most humiliating privations, to be for ever shut up in solitude and poverty, undergoing the severest penances and a daily course of most mortifying discipline. Are not these great sacrifices? But, alas! with all this there was no salt. It was not the grace of God nor the operations of his Spirit upon their heart which made them do this. But the sacrifice was not the less; nay, indeed, greater to the flesh, for there was no grace to support them under it. I have brought forward these two instances to show how persons may offer themselves in sacrifice, but the whole be unacceptable to

God, and one to which they were no more led by the operation of the Holy Spirit than the king of Moab was, when he took his eldest son and offered him for a burnt offering upon the wall. So you also, in your narrow sphere and without their sacrifices, may do many things as you think for the Lord, but if the salt be lacking, they are tasteless, unacceptable, unaccepted. But having been yourself, by the power of God's grace, salted with fire, then you may offer a spiritual sacrifice. As the apostle speaks, "to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."

2. What, then, is the next sacrifice after you have offered yourself, laid body, soul, property, prospects, all you are, all you have at his feet, for the Lord to do with you as seemeth good in his sight? *A broken heart*; for a broken heart is God's sacrifice. "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit." (Psalm 51:17.) But the Lord enables you to offer it by salting you with fire. The law; the fiery trial; temptation; his word; and especially his love revealed to the soul, produce brokenness, contrition, humility, lay the soul low at his feet; and this brokenness of heart is a spiritual sacrifice; it is salted with salt, for the grace of God is in it to season it and make it acceptable.

3. *Prayer*, again, and *praise* are spiritual sacrifices for they are the "calves of our lips" which we render unto God. (Hosea 14:2.) To these sacrifices we have a reference in the prophet Isaiah, where, speaking of the sons of the stranger, the Lord says, "Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people." (Isai. 56:7.) But that they may be accepted upon God's altar they must be salted with salt. How many prayers are offered up publicly and privately that never spring out of

a broken heart, a contrite spirit, or a humble mind; are never salted by the Spirit's operation, and therefore not acceptable before God; for the salt is lacking from the offering; and the salt being lacking, it is not preserved from corruption; it is not seasoned or flavoured; has no part or lot in a covenant of perpetuity and peace; and lacking all these things, is not acceptable to God or to his people.

4. Your *conversation* with the saints of God must be also seasoned with salt to be a spiritual sacrifice. "Let your speech," says the apostle, "be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man." How tasteless, how flavourless, how unprofitable, how unacceptable to a spiritual mind is the conversation of most professors of religion in our day! Of old, when "those that feared the Lord spake often one to another, the Lord hearkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him." (Mal. 3:16.) But would the Lord hearken and hear the conversation in our day, or write it down in a book of remembrance? We should be ashamed, I believe, many of us to read it ourselves were it written down faithfully. Conversation to be profitable should be seasoned with salt; then it will be "good to the use of edifying and will minister grace unto the hearers." (Ephes. 4:29.) Without this it will be "a corrupt communication." But if the sacrificer is not well salted with fire, salt will be lacking from his conversation. What flavour is there in an unsalted tongue? Soft indeed it may be, pappy, and pulpy; but how soon tainted unless salt be well rubbed into its pores. An unsalted tongue ministers death, not life, barrenness and condemnation, not fruitfulness and grace. Rather hold your tongue in the company of God's people than be to them a minister of barrenness and death. But how many great religious professors can talk readily upon carnal topics and worldly subjects, and anything and everything but God and

his Christ or the work of grace on the heart.

5. The *preaching of the word*, the ministry of the Gospel, is also a spiritual sacrifice; and many a man has sacrificed his comforts, his health and strength, and his very life to the ministry, made himself prematurely old, and brought upon himself disease and suffering which have shortened his days by the arduous labours and anxieties connected with holding forth the word of life. But his tongue, too, must be seasoned with salt, or it will not minister grace to the hearers; will have neither savour nor flavour, neither power nor pungency, neither force nor faithfulness; will neither rightly divide the word of truth, nor take forth the precious from the vile. But the salted tongue can only move as influenced by a salted heart. The minister, therefore, must be salted with fire, know something of the fiery trial, be exercised with temptation, feel the power of God's word in his conscience and something of the love of God, that he, in offering the sacrifice, in preaching the Person, the work, the blood, the righteousness, the grace and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, may bring these heavenly truths before the people well seasoned with salt.

6. *Gifts and acts of liberality* to God's people—these are also spiritual sacrifices. The apostle speaks highly of them, when writing to the Philippians, he says, "But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God." (Phil. 4:18.) But why were their gifts a sacrifice "acceptable, well-pleasing to God?" It was not the greatness of the amount, but it was because grace was in the givers, and being sent to Paul under the influence of love, they were seasoned with salt. It was this which made them acceptable. Men may give large sums of money away—and I speak to the praise of many in saying what a vast amount is now being raised for the

suffering operatives of the north. I confess that I much admire the benevolence and liberality all through the land which has thus been called forth. Still, all of it may not be a salted sacrifice. Apart from a natural feeling of benevolence and compassion to the sufferers under what we may well call this national calamity, may not other springs move the outstretched hand? I would not discredit so good a work; but to make it a sacrifice acceptable to God it must be salted with grace, and not be done through ostentation or the force of example. I am daily receiving contributions from gracious individuals and the collected liberality of churches and congregations for our famishing brethren, which I am distributing amongst them: and what is thus given in the fear of God, with an eye to his glory and from love to his people will be viewed by him as a spiritual sacrifice, seasoned with salt. So that whether a man do much or little—and some can do nothing in aiding the saints of God—it is a spiritual sacrifice, acceptable to God when it springs from spiritual motives, and is salted with the salt of his grace.

IV.—But we now come to a case which the Lord *assumes as possible*: "*If the salt have lost its saltness, wherewith will ye season it?*"

i. The Lord assumes the case here that the salt may have lost its saltness—lost everything which makes its valuable; and I have read that this is the case sometimes in Eastern countries. I think it is Maundrell, or some old traveller in the East, who gives an account of his once coming to what appeared to be a mass of rock salt. He naturally stretched forth his hand to take a piece, but, when he tasted it, all the saltness was gone: it had been washed out by the deluging rains which in those climates fall at certain seasons from the skies. The substance and appearance remained the same; but the reality, the savour, all that made it salt, was gone. I

have also read of a similar instance in the salt lakes of those countries. When the lake becomes partially dry in the summer, it leaves a crust of salt upon the shore. Upon this the summer rains fall, washing out all the saline particles, but not injuring its outward look. It has thus all the appearance of salt, but none of the reality. This being a common phenomenon in those climates, the Lord assumes it as a case spiritually in the visible Church of God, and asks a very pregnant question: "If the salt has lost its saltness, wherewith will ye season it?" Observation and experience abundantly show us that the saint of God for a time may lose his saltness. Being salted with the King's salt, and this being a covenant of life and peace, he cannot altogether lose it, but he may lose much, very much of its savour. There may be a few particles of salt left, enough to save him, but not enough to make him savoury either to God or man. We frequently see this in old professors, who in times past seemed to show the possession of salt; but what with worldly cares, family anxieties, the hurry and flurry of business, the lapse of time, the want of gracious revivals, the growth in them is not in grace, but in covetousness and in worldly mindedness, and the deadness natural to advancing years, they at last sink into the spot of which the Lord here speaks—they lose their saltness. Is not that a deplorable case that your last days should be your worst; that your carnality should be so great and your spirituality so little as to cause considerable doubt in those who fear God whether you possess the grace of God at all? And is it not lamentable that the sacrifices you offer, or pretend to offer, before God should be unacceptable, because they have lost their saltness? There was a time with you, perhaps, when you had some brokenness of heart and contrition of spirit before God: your heart is hard enough and careless now. There was a time when you could make sacrifices, give up anything for the Lord's sake: now you can scarcely make any sacrifice at all; scarcely squeeze out half-

a-crown, though your pocket is full of them, for a poor child of God. There was a time when your prayers went out of a feeling, believing, warm heart: now they are cold and wandering, and there scarcely seems to be any life or power in them. There was a time when you met the family of God, and your heart burnt within you when you talked of the precious things of Christ; and now you can meet them, and your conversation be as carnal as that of any worldling. There was a time when you could praise the Lord with joyful lips; and now not one word of praise swells your note. There was a time when you could give liberally out of your poverty; and now you are so screwed up as to be hardly able to part with sixpence out of your wealth. Your salt has lost its savour; and though it preserves its appearance, yet, like the rock salt that Maundrell touched and tasted, it has lost all that made it really valuable. Does conscience smite you at all under the strokes which I am dealing at it? Are you sensible that you have lost your saltness? that you are not as in times past, and that if you possess the grace of God at all, it is at a very low ebb in your soul?

Well, now, the Lord asks the question, "If the salt have lost its saltness, wherewith will ye season it?" There is something to my mind very expressive in the way in which the Lord puts the question. The Lord does not say, "wherewith shall *I* season it," or "wherewith shall it be seasoned:" but "wherewith will ye season it." How will *you* bring back the saltness? *You* cannot do it; but the Lord can do it for you, if it be his holy will. But how does he bring it back? How does he re-season the salt? How did he give the soul it in the first instance when he salted the sacrificer? *By the fire*. Then he puts you back into the fire to give you back the salt. Don't you see the blacksmith do something like, if not exactly, this? Here is a piece of rusty iron, an old hoop, or a horse-shoe picked out of the dust: he can make it new; and you

know how he does it. He puts it into the fire, brings it to a white heat, hammers it well upon the anvil; why, it comes out brand new. Don't you know that the very best rifles which are manufactured are made out of old stub nails grubbed out of the mud of the London Streets? So the Lord can re-fire as well as refine his people's graces. To revert to our figure, he can put them into the furnace of affliction, and in that fire he can salt them over again. This is the way whereby the Lord usually restores the saltness which is lost. Temptation, the fiery trial, his word cutting them to the very quick, salts them again; and when thus put into the furnace, once more his love descends as a holy fire into their heart, and they are salted as with fresh salt; or, to change the figure, they renew their youth like the eagle. What a mercy it is that, partially, if not fully, the salt can be restored, because I have pointed out that salt was an emblem of a perpetual covenant as well as of amity and peace; for the saint of God, having been once salted, surely cannot lose all his saltness, and so be cast out of all acceptance with God, as the priest would reject the meat offering brought to him by the worshipper which had no salt upon it. If he could lose the grace of God, he must go where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched. Gifts, usefulness, a state and standing in the Church, knowledge, profession, and a name to live may all come to an end; but the grace of God in the heart of a saint is unperishing, imperishable.

V.—But we are now perhaps prepared to listen to the *exhortation* which fell from our Lord's lips: "*Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another.*"

1. *That* is the grand thing. Have salt in yourselves. Look to yourselves. Don't be spending all your eyesight, and all your hearing, and all the energy of your body and soul upon others, forgetting and neglecting what much more deeply

concerns you, *your own* salvation and the knowledge of it. Look to yourselves. People go about trying to convert the world who never were converted themselves. Don't you fall into that error. Have salt in yourselves. Look at your own heart and see what salt you have there. The Lord, you see, bids his people look in the first instance to themselves, and examine themselves how matters really stand with them before his heart-searching eye.

But what is it to have salt *in themselves*? The grace of God in their heart; for salt is an emblem of grace. "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt;" for as I have shown, grace preserves the soul from perishing in the corruption of the flesh. It is by grace we are "made partakers of the divine nature, and thus escape the corruption that is in the world through lust." (2 Pet. 1:4.) This salt of God's grace is to be upon their heart to make it right before him; upon their lips, that their conversation may be becoming the gospel, and their speech seasoned with salt; and in their lives, that their walk may be salted, their feet be salted, their hands salted, and every member of their body be salted, so as to be preserved from every corrupt communication, and every evil and corrupt way. I speak unto you in his name, my hearers, this day, "Have salt in yourselves." As a church, have salt in yourselves, that you may be preserved from corruption; for the church that loses its salt will soon only be fit for the dunghill. As a congregation, meeting together for the worship of God, to call upon his holy name in spirit and in truth, and to hear his word faithfully preached, have salt in yourselves, lest the Lord come and remove the candlestick out of its place. Yea, to all here present who desire to fear his name and to tremble at his word, I say have salt in yourselves, that you may have the comfort of God's presence and blessing upon a dying bed, and when the body drops into the grave may enter into the joy of the Lord.

2. But the Lord also added, "Have *peace* one with another." Salt, we know, was the emblem of peace. So the Lord bade his disciples have salt in themselves, and eat salt with one another. But this peace, like every other gospel fruit, must be salted with salt. It must be, therefore, peace on a right footing, peace on a gospel bottom, for there may be peace where there is no salt. Is there not a crying, "Peace, peace, where there is no peace?" We have too much of this false peace both with God and man. As a heap of stones will lie together very comfortably, so there may be false peace and false union among people and in churches where the stillness of death reigns. But as a sacrifice without the salt was unacceptable, so a false peace or a peace without salt is of no avail to assure the heart or to walk comfortably with the family of God. Grace in the heart, peace in the conscience, and peace with the brethren, these are choice blessings. Can I do better than leave the words ringing in your ears, "Have salt in yourselves and have peace one with another?"