

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Radical Discipleship

Scripture: Mark 9:42-50

Code: 41-47

And now I want you to open your Bible to Mark 9, verses 42 to 50, the last section in this ninth chapter...Mark chapter 9 and we'll pick up the account in verse 42.

This is a very fascinating portion of Scripture. It has some features in it that are somewhat challenging to the interpreter and therefore highly challenging to me. It has been tampered with through the years, since the original revelation came from God. We know that because the early manuscripts that we have are consistent. Later manuscripts add things or change things. So we have additions in later manuscripts and we have alterations in later manuscripts. And that usually happens because there are scribes who want to increase the potency of a passage and so they add something to it, not something different, but they kind of double up on an emphasis. Or if they feel something is unclear, they might try to clarify it.

Well this passage has both of those kinds of additions. There are things here that are so firm, so strong, so threatening, so severe that somewhere along the line people thought they needed to ramp up the message because of its severity. And there are things in this passage that are cryptic and challenging to interpret and so through the years there have been some alterations, maybe by scribes who wanted to clarify a little bit. Not a good thing to do, change the text. But fortunately we have as close to the original as we're going to get and we're going to take the passage at its purest form.

One of the great realities of Scripture is the preservation of the original which God has overseen so that we have a true reflection of the original Greek and Hebrew text. Let me read this to you and if you'll notice it, I'm going to skip verses 44 and 46 when I read. It may be if you have an NAS or one of the newer translations, you see brackets around them. That is because in the earlier manuscripts, these two statements do not occur. However, the statement in verse 44 & 46 is in verse 48. So we assume that some scribe saw the urgency of this and just wanted to pile it on a little bit. So we'll leave them out as we read it.

Verse 42, "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. 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," then verse 45, "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 in to hell." Then verse 47, "If your eye causes you to stumble, throw 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, where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched. For everyone will be salted with fire. 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.”

This is a very unique portion of Scripture. It is full of graphic terminology, dramatic acts, severe warnings and rather violent threats. It really is a passage about radical discipleship and the language bears testimony to that. It calls for radical behaviors. And it shows us just how radical it is to be a true disciple of Jesus Christ.

Our Lord here, in these verses, is calling for radical discipleship. I think this is a message that is highly necessary for the day in which we live when under the name of Christianity and even evangelical Christianity, there is so much superficiality. The language here is severe, extreme, fanatical and radical language. And that fits the radical nature of our Lord’s invitation to true discipleship.

Let me talk about the word “radical.” It’s a word you hear, it’s a word you know, it’s a word we experience in our world commonly. If you look in the dictionary, you’ll find two meanings for the word “radical.” Number one, probably will be, this word means basic or fundamental, or foundational, something primary, intrinsic or essential.

The second meaning, which may be the one that is more popular today, is that it also means something that deviates by its extreme. When we think of something radical, we think of something revolutionary, or something severe, or as I mentioned, something fanatical. But really the word is both. It is a word that refers to something that is fundamental and fanatical, that is intrinsic and intensive, that is essential and extreme. Therefore, it is a great word to use as an adjective for a discipleship because discipleship is something fundamental fanatical, something intrinsic and intensive, something essential and something extreme. The basics of being a disciple are really radical.

Now such a call to radical discipleship, as we have just read in this passage, is not new to the ministry of our Lord. It is consistent with the ministry of our Lord. Our Lord has had an evangelistic ministry. He has been calling people, inviting people into the Kingdom of heaven, into the realm of salvation, to come, repent of their sins, believe in Him, receive forgiveness and eternal life and become His disciples, His true follower. But His calls have been very radical. He has told people they need to repent of their sins. They need to turn from their sins. He has told them they have to deny themselves. They have to be willing to forsake all family ties, all earthly relationships, hate your father, your mother, your sister, your brother and hate even your own life. He has told them that it may be the forfeiture of their money, the forfeiture of their earthly future, certainly the control of their life. They are to be willing to die, maybe even be crucified and then to follow Him in total submission. This is radical discipleship and this is radical salvation. The text then is not an anomaly, it is not a

deviation, it is not a turning up, heating up the invitation of Christ, it is rather consistent with everything that He has said.

Now when I look at this passage after long hours of pouring over it and trying to distill it down into manageable bites, I find here that there are calls for four aspects of radical discipleship: radical love, radical purity, radical sacrifice and radical obedience. Now remember, this is a lesson that our Lord is giving to His Apostles and other disciples. We are now in the period of His ministry in the book of Mark where He is in training with the Twelve. We have already been to school on prayer and faith. Last week we went to school with them on the subject of humility. And now we're going to get a lesson on radical discipleship.

The first thing we're going to see here is a call for radical love...radical love. Verse 42, "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." Matthew adds, "Into the depths of the sea."

What the Lord is calling for here is love, believe it or not. Love for other believers so that we do not lead them into sin. He is zealous for the corporate righteousness of His beloved children, His family, His Kingdom, His church. He warns in this very severe statement that before you would lead another believer to sin, you would be better off to die a horrible death.

It is not new for the Lord to have this kind of protective attitude toward His own. In fact, you can find this in Genesis chapter 12 where God tells Abraham that out of his loins is going to come a great nation, namely the nation of Israel. And at that very inaugural point, the Lord says to Abraham, "Whoever blesses you will be blessed, and whoever curses you will be cursed." And that sets down a principle that if you harm God's people, harm will come to you. If you bless God's people, blessing will come to you. In the Old Testament, God calls Israel the apple of His eye. I think some people think that's an apple you hold out here and look at. No, the apple of your eye is the center of your eyeball and God says if you touch Israel, you touch the apple of My eye, meaning that if you touch Israel, you poke your finger in My eye, and that irritates me.

In Psalm 105, again you have this protective attitude that God has toward those who are His. In verse 10 He speaks about Israel and His covenant with them as an everlasting covenant. He talks about giving them the land of Canaan as a portion of their inheritance. Then down in verse 15 He says, "Do not touch My anointed ones and do my prophets no harm." This is a threat...this is a threat, and so is verse 42.

This is parallel to a more extensive record of our Lord's teaching on this. Turn to Matthew 18...Matthew 18, verse 6. The same threat is given here, then I want to point you to verse 7. Verse 6, "Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him to

have a heavy millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.” Then verse 7, “Woe to the world because of its stumbling blocks.” Look, you expect stumbling blocks from the world. You expect the world to cause people to sin. You expect the world to solicit and seduce because the world is in the power of Satan. You expect it from the world. “It is inevitable,” verse 7 says, “that stumbling blocks come but woe to that man through whom the stumbling block comes.” Woe is a denunciation that, in effect, is a curse. We expect it from the world. We expect the world to seduce believers because that’s what the world does all the time. But judgment is pronounced on the world and extended to anyone, even in the household of God, who solicits another believer into sin.

This, by the way, is a favorite emphasis of our Lord. This is like a primary foundational truth about how we deal with one another, and it’s built on a principle we saw back earlier in Mark chapter 9. If you will go with me back to verse 37, you will read this, “Whoever receives one child like this in My name, receives Me. And whoever receives Me does not receive Me but Him who sent Me.” Here’s the point. Christ lives in every believer. How you treat a believer is how you treat Christ, and how you treat Christ is how you treat God. You can’t isolate the believer from Christ. You cannot isolate the believer from God the Father because they dwell in that believer. John 13 verse 20, “Truly, truly I say to you, he who receives whomever I send, receives Me and he who receives Me, receives Him who sent Me.” How you treat another believer is how you treat Christ.

1st Corinthians 6:17 says, “He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit.” That passage also says, “If you go and join yourself to a harlot, you join Christ to the harlot.” The believer becomes inseparable from the Lord. Galatians 2:20, “Nevertheless I live,” Paul says, “yet not I but Christ lives in Me.”

This is the foundation of that. The Apostle Paul is on his way to the persecution of Christians headed for Damascus. The Lord strikes him down, makes him blind. He falls into the dirt and he hears this from the Lord, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?” Saul, who was Paul, is Paul to us, was breathing out threatening and slaughter against believers and Jesus said, “You’re persecuting Me.” This is so foundational in the life of the church as to be the first instruction the Lord gives the church in the New Testament, in Matthew 18, just to make sure you treat other believers with the knowledge that they are inseparable from both the Son and the Father and I might add, the Spirit who dwells in them. In Matthew 25:34, at the time of the establishing of the great Millennial Kingdom, the King will say to those on His right, the believers, “Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world, for I was hungry and you gave Me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave Me something to drink. I was a stranger and you invited Me in, naked and you clothed Me. I was sick and you visited Me. I was in prison and you came to Me.” And then the righteous will answer, “Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You something to drink? And when did we see You a stranger, invite You in, or naked and clothe You? When did we see You sick or in prison and come to You?” The King will answer and say to them, “Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least, you did it to Me.” This is the essential controlling reality at the very foundation of how we treat

one another in the church. That's the positive aspect that leads to this negative threat.

Go back then to Mark chapter 9, the threat is unmistakable. "Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe, not children but believers who are considered His children, His precious ones, to stumble...to stumble." What do we mean by stumble? *Skandalizomi*, to be caught in sin, to be trapped in sin, entrapped, "Whoever causes one...not a group, one, and one is emphatic...it would be better to have a *mulos onikos* tied around your neck. *Mulos* is mule, *onikos* is stone. They used to grind grain using a mule. There would be a fixed stone and on top of that a round stone that would roll around and crush the grain and be pulled by a mule. It would weigh tons...tons. You would be better off to have one of those tied around your neck and have you thrown to the bottom of the ocean than to cause another Christian to be trapped in sin. Drowning is a very unforgettable threat to Jewish people. They are not seafaring people, the ocean is a great barrier to them, they are agrarian people, they fish in the lake. They don't like the depths of the sea. This is a horrifying threat.

What our Lord is calling for here is radical love, the kind of love that works very hard never to be a source of sinful solicitation to another person. To solicit them toward the lust of the flesh, toward the lust of the eyes, materialism, toward the love of the world, toward pride, we're talking here about the other believers in your life, children, spouses, friends, acquaintances. Love doesn't do that. Love doesn't solicit to sin. Love does the very opposite of that. According to 1 Corinthians chapter 13, love doesn't enjoy someone falling into sin. According to 1 Peter 4, Peter says, "Love one another with a stretched love, *ektenes*, fervent love. It's a word used of stretching a muscle to its absolute maximum. It's an all-encompassing love that reaches as far as it can possibly go and this kind of love doesn't solicit sin, it covers sin. It does the very opposite. Fervent love helps others toward holiness. Philippians 2 would define it as the kind of love, the kind of affection that thinks more highly of others than of oneself. It's the kind of love that elevates, that uplifts toward righteousness.

How is it that we can lead others into sin? I can give you four simple, general answers to that question. Number one, by direct temptation. You all understand that. You tempt somebody to sin, you invite someone to sin, you invite them to sin morally against the laws of God, against the commandments of our Lord by direct solicitation. You invite people to lie, to gossip, to cheat. You invite people to love the world, you draw them in to ungodly enterprise as activities, entertainment, whatever. You understand that.

But there's a second way, and that's by indirect temptation. You provoke them to jealousy by flaunting what you have. You...you provoke them to anger by indifference or unkindness, like your children, you know, Ephesians 6:4, "Provoke not your children to wrath," by inattention, lack of affection, lack of forgiveness, lack of kindness, overbearing expectations. You can do it directly or indirectly.

Thirdly, another way that you can cause people to stumble is by setting a sinful example, simply by doing things that people see that are sinful which path they perhaps will follow. Romans 14, it can be

flaunting your liberty which will then lead someone else to do the same but because that conscience has not yet been liberated to understand the full freedoms in Christ, Paul says, it's destructive because this is training a person to violate conscience and that has a very bad outcome. You have to be careful of the example that you set. Just when you don't think people are watching, the truth is, they are.

So either by direct temptation, indirect temptation, by setting a sinful example, or maybe, fourthly, by just failing to stimulate righteousness. Failing to encourage godliness, what does the church do when it comes together? Stimulating one another to love and good works, Hebrews 10:24 and 25, "and much the more to see the day approaching."

So in any of these ways, overlapping, intertwined ways, we can lead others to sin. And our Lord says, "You'd be better off to die a horrible death than to do that." This is...this is the strongest threat that ever came out of the mouth of Jesus to His own people and it calls for radical love and love seeks someone's best, love seeks to elevate, love seeks to purify, love seeks to bless.

But not just radical love is called for in radical discipleship, secondly is radical purity...radical purity. And that's what is laid out in verses 43, 45, and 47. And, of course, they go together because you're never going to be able to lead someone else into righteousness if you're not righteous yourself. You're not going to be a purifying influence on others unless your own heart is pure. Just the reverse is true. If your own heart is impure, you will lead others into sin. You will be the means of other people's entrapment.

So, the danger of leading others to sin is eliminated when you deal with sin in your own heart. And what this text calls for is a radical severe dealing with that sin. Verse 43, "If your hand causes you to stumble," and as you stumble, you obviously will lead others to stumble, if your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off; better for you to enter life crippled than having your two hands go into hell into the unquenchable fire." Verse 45, "If your foot causes you to stumble, to be entrapped, same verb, in sin, cut it off. It's better for you to enter life lame than having your two feet to be cast into hell." Then verse 47, "If your eye causes you to stumble, throw 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."

The language here is just so strong. The first thing that strikes me is the severity with which we are to deal with sin. This is extreme behavior. This reminds me of the illustration of the Old Testament of hacking Agag to pieces, as a king of a symbol of how we have to deal with sin. This is the language that's similar to Romans where Paul talks about killing sin, mortifying it. This is aggressive, severe treatment of sin, and it's in metaphoric hyperbole, it's in metaphoric hyperbole.

The language calls for radical, severe action against any and all sin. Body parts are mentioned here, the hands, the feet and the eyes. And I think the sum of those is simply to say everything you see,

everything you do, everywhere you go...everything that relates to your life, all behaviors, these three separate parts are symbolic of the overall general emphasis and the verbs are all in the present tense, which means you keep on doing it. It's not once and for all we would like to think of that, but that's not the way it is. Present tense verbs emphasize the continual struggle with temptation and with sin.

And what our Lord is saying is that salvation and the Kingdom of God, mentioned in verse 47, which you want to enter, or life as it's referred to in verse 43 and 44 which means eternal life, spiritual life, salvation on the positive side and escape from hell on the negative side is so important that you need to get rid of anything that is a barrier to that. That's the point. Amputation is what's in view, amputation, radical, severe action against anything that stands in the way of the pursuit of holiness, righteousness and purity.

Obviously our Lord is not calling for physical mutilation, not at all. I promise you, a person with one eye and a person with one hand, and a person with one leg or for that matter, a person with no hands, no legs and no eyes does not thereby conquer sin. That kind of folly developed in the history of the church, even from the second century on, that somehow if you emasculated yourself or if you mutilated yourself physically in some way, you can defeat sin. That kind of view in those early years gained enough traction to have developed into a kind of full-fledged cult in the Middle Ages, a false view developed by Monks and Ascetics who took passages like these and Matthew 19:12 where it refers to those who have been made eunuchs as if somehow in an action like that they could thereby conquer sin. The testimony from people who did that is that it had no real effect on their hearts, although it may have seriously altered their behavior. The issue is on the inside.

Go back to chapter 7, for a moment. In verse 14 He calls together the crowd and He says, "Listen to Me, all of you, and understand..." Verse 15, "There's nothing outside the man that can defile him if it goes into him, but the things which proceed out of the man are what defile the man." There's nothing outside the man, including his physical attributes. "Are you so lacking," verse 18 says, "in understanding also because the disciples asked Him a question, do you not understand that whatever goes into the man from outside cannot defile him because it doesn't go into his heart, but into his stomach and is eliminated? That which proceeds," verse 10, "out of the man, that is what defiles the man, for from within, out of the heart of men proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting and wickedness as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man." You can't do anything to fix the problem by working on the outside. James 1:14 and 15, says, "Sin is the product of lust conceiving in the heart and bringing forth sin." It is, as John says, the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh and the pride of life, inner attitudes that lead to sin.

The call here then is metaphoric. Concentrate on your own purity. In Matthew 5 the Lord used this same kind of language with reference to sexual sins. He said, verse 27, in the Sermon on the Mount,

“You shall not commit adultery but I say to you, everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” Now what He is saying is, you’re going to have to deal with this problem not just on the outside, you’re going to have to deal with it on the inside. And then He uses the same illustration. “If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you. It’s better for you to lose one of the parts of your body than your whole body be thrown into hell. If your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off, throw it from you, for it’s better for you to lose one of the parts of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.”

Obviously He just said, the problem is on the inside, your lusting on the outside, and then He uses an illustration of hacking off a limb on the outside which proves to you that this is only a metaphor. Deal seriously with sin. Sexual sin in that illustration, but any kind and all kinds of sin...deal drastically with it.

Now please notice. You say, “Well, we’re talking about discipleship here.” Right. But please notice that not to do this doesn’t end up in you being a carnal Christian, some kind of second-class believer. Not to do this ends up with you being in hell. Okay? In hell, and that’s why hell is mentioned in verse 43 and verse 45, and verse 47 because hell is at stake here. The references to hell as the disastrous alternative indicate that these statements are calls to an initial, genuine repentance and faith in Jesus Christ that accompanies salvation. We’re talking about deliverance from eternal hell. Do this or go to hell.

That’s what he’s saying, language that sounds a lot like Jeremiah. Jeremiah 4:14, “Wash your heart from evil, O Jerusalem, that you may be saved. How long will your wicked thoughts lodge within you?” How long are you going to go along and not deal with the wickedness that’s in you? Be saved. This is a call to salvation. Choose holiness or hell. Choose the eternal Kingdom of salvation, or the eternal punishment of hell. Because, you see, no real salvation comes unless there is a heart that seeks after righteousness. “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for...what?...for righteousness,” the beatitude.

This then is the initial commitment of a believer to purity that then becomes the pattern of that believer’s entire life. The pursuit of that holiness starts at salvation. Our Lord is simply saying, “Purify your hearts,” as James says, “Purify your hearts, you sinners, cleanse yourselves.” That’s the initial call to salvation that then becomes the sanctifying pattern of life. But the threat is hell.

The word “hell,” by the way, is Gehenna...Gehenna. It is a very interesting term. It is always the term that refers to the Lake of Fire, not just the place of the dead like Hades, but the actual burning Lake of Fire. That is why verse 43 describes hell as the place of unquenchable fire. And verse 48, “Where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.”

Gehenna, where did that word come from? The root of that word comes from the Valley of Hinnom...the Valley of Hinnom, mentioned in Joshua 15:8. It is a steep ravine down to a valley, south of the city of Jerusalem, very severe. That was a place where Ahaz and Manasseh, two kings, offered human sacrifices to Molech. You can read about it in 2 Kings 16 and 21, 2 Chronicles 28 and 33. Human sacrifices in the land of Israel, in the Valley of Hinnom, to pacify this vicious, false deity named Molech...an unthinkable practice that Jewish people would sacrifice their babies to Molech. It was denounced, of course, by the prophets, particularly Jeremiah, Jeremiah 7:31, Jeremiah 32:35. In fact, Jeremiah renames it in Jeremiah 19:6, he calls it "the Valley of Slaughter...the Valley of Slaughter." And he also calls it the Valley of Topeth. Topeth comes from a Hebrew word that means drum.

Why would it be called the Valley of the Drum? Because some historians tell us that drums were beaten there regularly to drown out the screams of the burning babies. A horrendous place.

Josiah, the good king according to 2 Kings 23:10, shut that down, stopped all that and turned it in to Jerusalem's garbage dump. I mean real garbage, no plastic, no paper. Rancid food, sewage, maggots and a 24/7 fire consuming it. And it was easily adapted as the word to describe eternal hell...unquenchable fire.

This is the emphasis of Scripture. All the way from the beginning, Matthew 25 to the end, Revelation 20, hell is a reality about which we are warned. Hell is mentioned twelve times in the New Testament, eleven of them by Jesus, the other one by James...James 3:6. And in this place, the fire is not quenched and the worm never die...that's verse 48.

By the way, verse 48 is a direct quote from Isaiah 66:24 and if you remember Isaiah, that's the last verse in Isaiah. Isaiah ends with a horrible, horrible pronouncement of judgment. "They will go forth and look on the corpses of the men who have transgressed against Me, for their worm will not die and their fire will not be quenched, and they will be an abhorrence to all mankind." Looking at the judgment when the Lord comes as final judge.

This is the strongest call to discipleship, maybe the strongest our Lord ever gave. You either deal radically with issues of sin in your life, or you end up in the eternal dump, the garbage pit punished forever where there will be darkness, weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth in isolation, according to what we read in so many places in Matthew.

And once we run from sin toward righteousness and embrace the Savior, the only one who can save us from sin, and grant us that righteousness, and then sanctify us and then one day glorify us, until we do that, we haven't even begun to be disciples. And once we have come to be disciples, that continues to be the pursuit, doesn't it? Paul says, "I beat my body to bring it into subjection so that I don't become disqualified for ministry." I have to subdue my flesh.

In 2 Corinthians 7:1 he says, "Perfecting holiness." That's what we need to be doing. We need to be pursuing it and getting as close to perfecting it as possible. This is a wonderful verse, "Let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." We want to pursue the things that are right. Listen to Philippians 4:8, "Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good report, if there's any excellence, if anything is worthy of praise, think on these things, dwell on these things." Pursue a clear conscience. Radical love, radical purity, thirdly, radical sacrifice...radical sacrifice. I'm going to go over about five minutes, so don't worry. Radical sacrifice. You'll see.

Verse 49, very cryptic, "For everyone will be salted with fire." For everyone will be salted with fire. What does that mean? That is so cryptic as to be very difficult to understand. I ask a simple question, where in Scripture is the place where fire and salt come together? In Ezra 6:9 it says that salt has to be stored up to be used in sacrifices. And in Ezekiel 43:23 and 24, we have salt also used with sacrifices. And that's the answer to the question...where do salt and fire come together? Because sacrifices are burned. Salt was added to sacrifices as a symbol of God's enduring covenant. Salt is a preservative.

But there's one particular sacrifice that really fits perfectly here, Leviticus 2. In the opening five chapters of Leviticus, you have Scripture instruction on the five offerings...five offerings. In chapter 2 you have the grain offering...the grain offering. And it describes that offering. But I want you to go down to verse 13, "Every grain offering of yours moreover you shall season with salt so that the salt of the covenant of your God should not be lacking from your grain offering. With all your offerings, you shall offer salt. Salt symbolizes God's promise, God's covenant, God's enduring faithfulness as you make the offering.

Now what is the grain offering? Well there were five offerings. There were four of them that were animal sacrifices...burnt offering, peace offering, sin offering, guilt offering, you see them in the first five chapters there. Those are all animal sacrifices and they all represent the need for atonement for sin. This is not an animal offering. This is not a sin offering. This is an offering of consecration. This is an offering of devotion and dedication. It symbolizes total devotion to the Lord. You gather up the grain, you gather up and you make a sacrifice of your grain on the altar. This then is covered with salt which speaks of the durability, the endurance and the permanence of this offering to God. God will keep His part and by sprinkling salt on it God we know will be faithful. His covenant, His lasting enduring faithfulness is symbolized in the salt and so should ours be as well. We are making a total sacrifice, a long-term, enduring, permanent offering. This is consecration, total consecration. So I call this radical sacrifice...radical sacrifice.

The New Testament equivalent of this, or explanation would be, “I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God that you present your bodies a...what...living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God which is your spiritual act of service.” That’s what we see in the grain offering. This is denying yourself, take up your cross, follow Me. This is giving yourself wholly, totally to Christ in the language of sacrifice, an enduring sacrifice. You’re not going to crawl off the altar at the first whim. You’re salting that, it’s a permanent sacrifice. That, I think, is the best explanation of that, that brings the two together.

What is radical discipleship require? A radical love for one another, radical purity in our own lives and a radical sacrifice to God. And there’s a fourth...radical obedience. Verse 50, salt is good. That we understand, *kalos*, useful, profitable, beneficial, of course, especially in a world with no refrigeration, no ice. Preservation required salting. Salt is good unless it becomes unsalty. “But if the salt becomes unsalty, with what will you make it salty again?” Or another way to say that, “When the salt isn’t salty, what do you salt the salt with?” That’s what He’s saying.

By the way, Jesus made frequent reference to this matter of salt, this same thing, Matthew 5:13, we’ll look at in a minute, Luke 14:34-35. Salt is good unless it loses its saltiness. Now if any of you are in to chemicals out there, chemistry, you know that sodium chloride is stable. Just sitting around it doesn’t lose its saltiness. So the question comes up, “What can this mean, since salt is stable and doesn’t lose its property, even over a long period of time? What can it refer to?”

We’re helped by some historians. Some of them may be ancient like Pliny who recorded the fact that there were several kinds of salts in Israel and many of them had properties that made them impure and they were basically worthless. One kind that seemed to be in some abundant supply with salt that was imperceptibly mixed with gypsum and it was worse than useless.

So our Lord says, while we’re talking about salt and dedication, let me just pick My salt illustration and move it up to another point. Salt is good but it’s only good if its unmixed...if it’s unmixed. And then comes His statement, “Have salt in yourselves. Be salt, don’t be salt mixed with gypsum or anything else, be undiluted, unmixed.” And that’s a command and I think it’s a command to radical obedience, a life that is unmixed. Why do you say that? Because He then gives them a direct practical application, “And be at peace with one another.” Why does He say that? Because that’s what they needed to hear. Back in verse 33 they were...Jesus says, “What were you discussing on the way down here to Capernaum? They kept silent. On the way they had discussed with one another which of them was the greatest.” Wow! They were basically proud, self-serving, competitive. They were guilty of leading each other into sin. There was anger. Anything but humility.

I think our Lord simply says, “You need to be unmixed in your obedience, and here’s your command for today. Stop fighting. Stop elevating yourselves. Stop the competition. Stop being the cause of temptation such as the essence of radical discipleship then, to love extremely, to deal with sin

severely, to sacrifice one's life wholly and to obey fanatically.

And what is the outcome of this? What is the result of this? Turn to Matthew 5...Matthew 5, "You are the salt of the earth." You're the only hope the planet has for a spiritual influence. So what you have as a result is radical witness. "And if you become tasteless, you're not good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men." Might as well remove you. Hum...maybe that's what happened to the people at the Lord's Table in the Corinthian church who died, or the sin unto death that John talks about. The Lord is saying, "Look, have salt in yourselves," in Mark. Here He says, "You're the salt of the earth, there is no other salt." There are no other spiritual influences in this world than the true disciples of Christ who are known by the radical nature of their discipleship.

Then He changes metaphors, "You're the light of the world. A city set on a hill can't be hidden, nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, it gives light to all who are in the house. So let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven." The end of all is that God would be glorified, right? And what is going to attract people to glorifying God is going to be the witness you give because you are salt and light by virtue of your radical discipleship. Well, now, folks, I have a practical application for you. Really radical, radical membership at Grace Church...good place to start. Let's pray. It's really not that radical, is it? I mean, the rest of this stuff is radical, this is easy. Get with the program. All right, let's pray.

Father, thank You for this. Your Word is so fresh, so rich and, Lord, I only can offer this interpretation and understanding as consistent with everything else that New Testament truth would say. Nothing outside what the Word of God says. It is consistent with everything we know that is written in this holy book, Old and New, that we be radical in our love, our purity, our sacrifice, and our obedience in order that we might have a fanatical and radical and revolutionary effect on the world around us. May we be those people that You and the Father may be glorified. That's the end of all things. Thank You for giving us this incalculable privilege to bear the name of Christ, may we bear it well, to His honor and in His name. Amen.

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