**Mark 9:38-50 38John said to him, “Teacher, we saw someone driving out demons in your name. We tried to stop him, because he was not following us.” 39But Jesus said, “Do not try to stop him, because no one who does a miracle in my name will be able soon afterward to speak evil about me. 40Whoever is not against us is for us. 41Amen I tell you: Whoever gives you a cup of water to drink in my name, because you belong to Christ, will certainly not lose his reward. 42“Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to fall into sin, it would be better for him if he were thrown into the sea with a large millstone hung around his neck. 43If your hand causes you to fall into sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed, than to have two hands and go into hell, into the unquenchable fire, 44‘where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.’ 45If your foot causes you to fall into sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame, than to have two feet and be thrown into hell, 46‘where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.’ 47If your eye causes you to fall into sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell, 48‘where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.’ 49For everyone will be salted with fire. 50Salt is good. But if the salt loses its flavor, how will you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another.”**

Pass the Salt

1. Needed
2. The Judgment of God
3. In yourself

There are just some people who like to argue. They thrive on controversy and to stir the pot. Most people don’t like to argue but you’ve all got people who love to say things or do things just to get people worked up. You might say that add some salt to bland conversations. Sometimes it is obnoxious and gets people to just roll their eyes with a gruff and avoid talking. But sometimes a seemingly radical statement can serve to open people’s minds to think outside the box or at least get them to defend what they disagree with.

Wouldn’t you say that in a good way, Jesus was one of that kind of people? When he spoke, people didn’t fall asleep. They would either end up steaming mad, uplifted, or perplexed. He had an extreme way of saying things that caused divisions and making people angry or happy. Maybe that’s why they accused him of causing riots. He does the same in the lesson today. This was a good thing. He recommends that we do that same thing. Pass the salt because the salt is needed.

1. Do you remember how the disciples argued about which of them was the greatest? They were all wrapped up in who could do the greatest things to get a better place in heaven and greater rewards on Judgment Day. It really came dome to a competition. You can tell how the disciples were letting their competition get out of hand because they treated other Christians poorly. **John said to him, “Teacher, we saw someone driving out demons in your name. We tried to stop him, because he was not following us.”**

Why did the disciples get so worked up over that? He wasn’t doing anything wrong. He wasn’t misusing Jesus’ name. In fact, he was using it correctly. They told him to stop because the man wasn’t one of them. You can’t help but think they were being glory seeking brats. They wanted it all for themselves. They didn’t like to see anyone else with the same powers they had been given. So, they found a reason to stop him. It’s much like the story of Joshua from Numbers. He was all worked up because Moses didn’t stop the people from prophesying. He wanted them to stop when they had done nothing wrong. He wanted Moses to be the only prophet. These reactions revealed a sinful selfish jealousy. It wants to be the only one who God allows to do great things.

This sin gets repeated. You would think two people tying to chase our demons in Jesus’ name would both let each other go for it. But what happens? One starts to have more success or recognition and then the other becomes jealous. It even happens with John the Baptist’s disciples regarding Jesus. In of rejoicing over the Savior being on earth, the Devil stepped in to it. He whispers in the ear of the one with less success, “you could do better than that! He’s only getting more converts because he’s telling people what they want to hear.”

This type of sin also rears its destruction in congregations. When members become more involved, you have jealousy over who gets to do what. It’s one of the big parts of why people don’t want to step up in the first place. Because when someone serves the Lord in a way that you would not have done it, it has to be wrong for them to do it, right? Must mean it’s time for us to speak up and get it our way. You can become so accustomed to being the one who got to make decisions that when you don’t get your way, you throw your tantrum by trying to get more people on your side, by forcing people to do what you want, by telling them to stop. If left unchecked it can become a bunch of backstabbing bickering with battle line where there is to be unity. It’s as if both see a demon in the distance, but they both want to get the glory of slaying it. Before you know it, they get in an argument over who should chase which demons (who should do what where and when) and how he should be chased. Meanwhile the Devil just keeps doing his work, and he laughs.

How did Jesus respond? **Jesus said, “Do not try to stop him, because no one who does a miracle in my name will be able soon afterward to speak evil about me. 40Whoever is not against us is for us. 41Amen I tell you: Whoever gives you a cup of water to drink in my name, because you belong to Christ, will certainly not lose his reward.** What was Jesus’ concern? His Name! Not the names of his disciples. Not your name. Those names don’t save anyone. As long as they were doing miracles in his name, they couldn’t turn around and degrade Jesus. As long as it glorifies his name, there was no reason to stop them. Ultimately, God would give rewards for even giving someone a cup of water in his name. Are they going to hinder that too? Don’t worry about who is chasing out demons, who is serving in a certain way, as long as it’s being faithful done in accordance with God’s Word in Jesus’ name.

What’s the lesson? As long as Jesus’ name is being glorified, more than one person can serve in the same way with different people. God can use other people beside you to serve, and you don’t all need to serve in the same flashy way. Don’t flatter yourself to think that other people can’t do at least just as good a job as you. It’s really a lesson in humility. It stings a bit like salt in an open wound. But guess what? You need it.

2. This was just a pinch of salt that Jesus put on pride. Jesus was just getting started. Next, he passed the salt which is God’s judgment. He continued to really dump it on. Since the disciples were concerned about how many great things they should do in competition for greatness, Jesus wanted them to take a step back. This is why he brings up causing others to sin and cutting off body parts. He is saying that all of the competition the disciples were doing wasn’t even just wasted effort. It was earning hell.

One such sin that would earn hell would be to cause a young believer to sin. **Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to fall into sin, it would be better for him if he were thrown into the sea with a large millstone hung around his neck.**He is talking about causing someone to fall from faith. Jesus was saying that is you cause a little one to fall from faith, even unknowingly, it would be better for a big stone to be tied around your neck and for you to be thrown into the depths of the sea.

That’s not all they had to beware of. Not only did they have to worry about what caused others to sin, but what caused them to sin. Jesus said, **If your hand causes you to fall into sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed, than to have two hands and go into hell, into the unquenchable fire, 44‘where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.’ 45If your foot causes you to fall into sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame, than to have two feet and be thrown into hell, 46‘where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.’**Jesus basically just started getting all salty on all the parts of the body. “If you really want to be great and continue to be glory seekers,” Jesus said, “your hand can’t sin. Your foot can’t sin. Your eye can’t sin. If it does, then cut it off!” Why? Because nothing sinful can enter heaven.

Immediately all the hearers would have to think, “Has my hand ever stolen anything? Has it ever touched someone in a wrong way? Have my feet ever kicked anyone? Have they ever walked into a place that I shouldn’t have been? What about my eyes? Have I ever looked with lust at anyone?” Jesus said, “If they have sinned, you need to chop them off if you want to truly be better than other people and gain heaven by what you do.” I would imagine some have even tired to do this thinking that they could get into heaven by mutilating their bodies so they can’t sin. But natural reason would have to say, “What about my other hand? What about my mind? What about my heart?” Ultimately, Jesus said that everyone will be salted with fire. It doesn’t matter who you are or how many demons you’ve expelled or how many hands you have left, you are the one who will be salted with the fire of hell—condemned under God’s wrath and judgment. Talk about completely changing the topic and reversing the field. Talk about starting a controversy. Jesus took them from arguing about heaven to throwing them straight into hell.

3. Why would Jesus do this? He wasn’t just stirring things up or giving people something to talk about. He explains why. **Salt is good. But if the salt loses its flavor, how will you make it salty again?** Salt is a preservative. It keeps food from getting stale. This salty talk of Jesus helps preserve us. When we realize we can’t enter heaven with sin, sin in our hands, feet, eye, and heart, it makes us despair. It cuts open a wound and then pours salt in it making it hurt and sting. The sting of sin needs to be there. It has to hurt and it has to sting. Why? If it doesn’t, you won’t cry out for help; you will just brush it off. By salting us with fire, Jesus wanted the disciples and us to remember why we will stand before God and be let into heaven. It’s not because our hands and feet have been cut off, but because Jesus’ hands and feet were pierced. Jesus ended up with all the wounds of sin. He was assaulted on the cross by all of God’s judgment of sin. God passed all the guilt and hurt of sin to Jesus. Why? So that God’s wrath could be taken away.

In the race for greatness, the disciples were losing their salt. They were forgetting that even though they were chasing out demons, they still needed to remember what they really deserved. They needed to keep the fire of hell burning in front of them, to remember what they deserve and their need for a Savior. Jesus said, **Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another.**

When we memorize what each of the Ten Commandments means, we say, “We should fear and love God that we…” The fear and love of God will not be there unless you have salt in yourself, unless you remember each and every day that even when you do seemingly great things in God’s kingdom, your hands, eyes, and feet are still sinful. You still deserve to be thrown into hell. If it weren’t for God’s grace and Jesus’ sacrifice you would be on your way to hell. It took the sacrifice of Jesus Christ to take God’s assault on sin away from you. That’s the only reason you’re here. It’s not because you stopped drinking or smoking, stopped using or abusing your body or another’s, or that you stopped living in a certain sin. It’s not because you have done greater things than others. It’s because the blood of Jesus purifies you from every sin. When you remember that, when you have salt’s stinging truth inside you, it will keep you from trying to devour each other. It will keep you at peace with one another when you remember we’re all sinful. We were all sinners who were saved by the grace of Christ.

Many people when they eat add salt to their food because it helps enhance the natural flavors and bring it out more. It makes them savor every bite as the flavor fills their mouth. Before the disciples could really enjoy their salvation, they first needed some salt. Jesus added some flavor to the conversation by reminding them of the dangers of hell and how they deserved it. It wasn’t to send them to hell, but to keep them out of hell. Don’t forget the burning fire. It’s not the main course. But it helps enhance how much God’s grace seen in the crucifixion has done for you. The salt of God’s judgment enables you to fear and love God, recognizing that we have been saved from the fire. Pass the salt. Amen.