

Salt of the Earth

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After Jesus began his earthly mission and acquired a faithful following of devoted disciples, he went up into a mountain and there taught many important principles and truths which touch upon varied but vital matters pertaining to man's temporal and spiritual welfare and happiness.

I desire to discuss with you just one admonition taken from our Lord's renowned Sermon upon the Mount.

Said Jesus to his disciples: "*Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.*" (Matt. 5:13.)

For what purpose does Christ refer to his disciples as the "*salt of the earth*"? This scripture is not an idle nor insignificant statement, but to the contrary is profound and most meaningful. We are all acquainted with the savoring effect salt has in the seasoning of foods to make them more palatable to the taste, therefore, desirable and satisfying to eat.

Is the Savior suggesting to his disciples in this declaration that, abiding fully by the gospel plan of life and salvation, they can acquire a savoring spiritual influence for good in the lives of all with whom they associate and labor?

I have heard men explain this teaching of our Lord by saying that in olden times salt, not refined as we have it today, but acquired in its natural state, was washed out and used to season food. When only the worthless tailings or residue remained, it was tossed upon the walkways to be trodden down by the feet of men.

I have searched the scriptures for a more complete understanding of Christ classifying his disciples as the "*salt of the earth*" and share with you the essential facts of my study and prayerful meditation.

The Gospel according to Mark contributes this additional thought by Jesus: ". . . *Have salt in yourselves and have peace one with another.*" (Mark 9:50.) And Luke, the physician, records this same teaching, then cites this further admonition by our Lord: ". . . *He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.*" (Luke 14:35.)

Symbol of Purity and Fidelity

Salt symbolized to the Hebrews purity and fidelity, also an unbreakable league of friendship. It was no doubt with this knowledge that Christ used the metaphor to drive home a doctrinal point his disciples could understand.

The Apostle Paul writing to the Colossian Saints counseled, "*Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.*" (Col. 4:6.)

The Book of Mormon record of Christ's visit to the Nephites reveals little more concerning the "*salt of the earth*" status of his disciples. It does, however, confirm the biblical statement and contributes this thought, "*but if the salt shall lose its savor wherewith shall the earth be salted? . . .*"(3 Nephi 12:13.)

The scriptures which I have quoted or referred to furnish but a glimpse of the meaning of this significant and profound statement of our Lord, but not a fulness of understanding. The fulness of that knowledge was reserved for the Dispensation of the Fulness of Times, or the era in which we live. It is found in a revelation of the Lord given to the Prophet Joseph Smith on December 16, 1833, at Kirtland, Ohio. In this important doctrinal disclosure the Lord said:

When men are called unto mine everlasting gospel, and covenant with an everlasting covenant, they are accounted as the salt of the earth and the savor of men;

They are called to be the savor of men; therefore, if that salt of the earth lose its savor, behold, it is thenceforth good for nothing only to be cast out and trodden under the feet of men. (D&C 101:39-40.)

This revelation is most enlightening. It is worthy of careful and prayerful study. It is a clear explanation and interpretation of Christ's statement which can be understood and which people accept as a correct guide to improve their personal lives and thus qualify them as the savor of men.

The Power of God Unto Salvation

Now let us carefully analyze the important elements of this revelation and briefly outline the course man must follow to achieve the spiritual strength and personal influence which prepare him to become "*the savor of men.*"

"When men are called," said Jesus, "unto mine everlasting gospel, . . ."(idem), which gospel, the Apostle Paul declared, "*. . . is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. . . .*" (Rom. 1:16.)

God's Saving Plan and Way of Life

The everlasting gospel, then, is God's saving plan and way of life for all his children upon the earth.

The Lord, through personal visits and by the ministration of angels, also by inspiration and revelation of the Holy Spirit, restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith the true and everlasting gospel of our Redeemer.

When an individual truly repents and is baptized by an authorized servant of God into the true Church of Christ and receives the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands by those possessing the Holy Melchizedek Priesthood, he has entered into the everlasting gospel and becomes a member

of God's Church and kingdom. By accepting the covenant of baptism, each convert obligates himself or herself to serve the Lord, to do his will, and to keep his commandments. This is the first qualifying step for the application of "*the salt of the earth*" status.

The second step is to ". . . *covenant with an everlasting covenant. . . .*" (D&C 101:39.) As we gain knowledge of the revelations, we learn that the gospel contains many covenants vital to the eternal welfare of man. This statement, therefore, has a plural connotation which I will explain.

Everlasting Covenant to Serve the Lord

But again, let me restate, every baptized person into the true Church of Christ enters into an everlasting covenant to serve the Lord, to do his will and to keep his commandments. Repentance and baptism by water and the receiving of the Holy Ghost afford entrance into the kingdom of God, and the convert, now a disciple of Christ has entered through the gate into the straight and narrow way which leads to life eternal.

". . . yea," said Nephi, an early Nephite prophet, "ye have done according to the commandments of the Father and the Son; and ye have received the Holy Ghost, which witnesses of the Father and the Son, unto the fulfilling of the promise which he hath made, that if ye entered in by the way ye should receive."

Then Nephi continues with this warning and counsel:

And now, my beloved brethren, after ye have gotten into this straight and narrow path, I would ask if all is done? Behold, I say unto you, Nay; for ye have not come thus far save it were by the word of Christ with unshaken faith in him, relying wholly upon the merits of him who is mighty to save.

Wherefore, ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men. Wherefore if ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life.

And now, behold, my beloved brethren, this is the way; and there is none other way nor name given under heaven whereby man can be saved in the kingdom of God. And now, behold, this is the doctrine of Christ, and the only and true doctrine of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, which is one God, without end. . . . (2 Nephi 31:18-22.)

To Gain Eternal Life, Endure to the End

Therefore, my beloved brethren and sisters and friends, after baptism and confirmation into the kingdom of God, according to Nephi, we must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ and endure to the end to gain eternal life. For by these first steps of repentance, baptism, and the receiving of the Holy Ghost, all requirements are not completed to obtain a fulness of glory in the eternal mansions of our Heavenly Father. Baptism alone does not fully prepare a person for eternal glory as many people are wont to believe.

Other Covenants

There are other important covenants of an everlasting nature included in the fulness of the gospel of Christ which vitally concern man's future well-being and happiness. These covenants are eternal in nature. However, they are to be received and accepted in mortal life by all mankind possessing such knowledge and desiring eternal glory. It is also necessary for them to meet all the conditions and requirements and to fulfil every obligation appertaining to each gospel covenant to find joy and happiness both here and hereafter.

The Lord, through Moses, admonished the children of Israel ". . . *to observe the sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant*" with their Israel. (See Exod. 31:16.)

The Ten Commandments given to Moses on Mt. Sinai are referred to in scripture as a covenant with the house of Israel. (See *ibid.*, 34:28.)

Every son of God who receives by ordination the Holy Melchizedek Priesthood is bound by an oath and covenant to keep faithfully all the commandments of God and to magnify his calling in the priesthood, which calling is a personal gift of God's power to him to officiate according to the spirit of his office and calling.

Every worthy church member privileged to enter the temples of the Lord for his or her endowment blessings accepts covenants and obligations of the most sacred nature, revealed of God for the glory of his children.

Every couple kneeling across the altar from each other in the temples of God for holy marriage enters into a covenant of the highest order, which is God's order, and which sealing and covenant is for time and for all eternity.

There are other covenants and obligations growing out of the endowment as well as the marriage contract which are binding upon the individuals concerned, and their obedience thereto assures the sanctifying influence and power of the Spirit and the spiritual renewing of their bodies in preparation for the blessings and glories which are to come.

The Lord Jesus Christ, just before his crucifixion upon the cross, gave the sacred ordinance of the Sacrament, which, in its very nature and purpose, is a covenant. It is an ordinance in which all faithful members of the Church can participate. In partaking of the sacramental emblems, all partakers witness unto God the Father and also unto each other that they will take upon them the name of his Son. They also covenant to always remember him and to keep the commandments which he has given them, and in so doing they have the blessed promise that his Spirit will always be with them.

Covenants Bind to a Course of Righteous Living

I hope these few scriptural quotes and statements, also the following teachings and observations from the revelations, will help us understand more perfectly what the Lord means to covenant with an everlasting covenant. We must keep in mind, however, as I have mentioned before, that in connection with all covenants there are conditions, requirements, and obligations which bind us to a course of righteous living and doing. It is in the meeting and fulfilling of these conditions, requirements, and obligations which build Christlike character in an individual and make possible

a savoring effect for good and righteousness in the lives of people. When this sanctified state and spiritual motivation are achieved, we are then accounted, as Jesus said, ". . . *the salt of the earth and the savor of men*" (D&C 101:39.)

Christ applied this metaphorical teaching to his disciples to convey a spiritual idea and ideal. ". . . *to be trodden under the feet of men*" (Matt. 5:13) means to trample divine things underfoot by failure to live according to revealed truth and the light which God has given for the temporal welfare as well as the eternal well-being, joy, and happiness of his people.

"The Salt of the Earth"

Jesus followed the statement to his disciples regarding their being designated "*the salt of the earth*" by an analogous and associated statement which gives significance and emphasis to the "*salt of the earth*" status.

Said the Lord: "*Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.*

"Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.

"Let your light so shine before men, [page 65] that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." (Ibid., 5:14-16.)

The Light of the World

Those then who are the "*salt of the earth*" are also the light of the world, and the radiance of that light, shining through their good works to mankind, glorifies our Eternal Father and strengthens his work and kingdom on the earth.

One of the best compliments an individual can say of another is that he or she is the "*salt of the earth*." It is most meaningful and suggests unquestioned Christlike character and conduct, uprightness, honesty, spirituality, sincerity of purpose, dignity, and other noble character virtues and qualities patterned after the divine nature of our Heavenly Father.

In another revelation given through the Prophet Joseph Smith at Kirtland, Ohio, on February 24, 1834, the Lord had this to say in admonition and counsel to his people:

And that those who call themselves after my name might be chastened for a little season with a sore and grievous chastisement, because they did not hearken altogether unto the precepts and commandments which I gave unto them.

But verily I say unto you, that I have decreed a decree which my people shall realize, inasmuch as they hearken from this very hour unto the counsel which I, the Lord their God, shall give unto them.

And by hearkening to observe all the words which I, the Lord their God, shall speak unto them, they shall never cease to prevail until the kingdoms of the world are subdued under my feet, and the earth is given unto the saints, to possess it forever and ever.

But inasmuch as they keep not my commandments, and hearken not to observe all my words, the kingdoms of the world shall prevail against them.

For they were set to be a light unto the world, and to be the saviors of men;

And inasmuch as they are not the saviors of men, they are as salt that has lost its savor, and is thenceforth good for nothing but to be cast out and trodden under foot of men. (D&C 103:4-5, 7-10.)

The World's Need

In the light of this revelation, as we view conditions among men and nations today, we realize the world needs more "salting." Who, then, or which group can help guide the people of the world to freedom and peace? The way to peace, brotherhood, and happiness is for the Saints of the Most High God to set an example in spiritual living and doing as to savor the souls of men in righteousness, truth, and brotherhood. Therefore, we who have membership in the Church of Christ and possess the gospel of peace and salvation have this privilege, responsibility, and challenge.

Let us, therefore, become more faithful, obedient, and exemplary in all our obligations and duties to God and our fellow men, and thus fully qualify to be considered "*the salt of the earth*" to savor the souls of men everywhere.

I bear witness, my brothers and sisters and friends, to the truthfulness of the work in which we are engaged, to the need the world has for the message of the gospel as we teach it. I pray that we may always be found faithful, true, and obedient in our devotions to our God, and I ask it humbly in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.