

Salt For Sacrifice

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JANUARY 23, 1887.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And every oblation of your meat offering shall you season with salt; neither shall you suffer the salt of the Covenant of your God to be lacking from your meat offering: with all your offerings you shall offer salt." [Leviticus 2:13](#).

IT is taken for granted that all true Israelites would bring many oblations and offerings of different kinds to God. And so they did who were truly devout and really grateful. I am sure that if the Lord has set our hearts on fire with His own love, we, also, shall be frequently saying, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me?" It will be the habit of the Christian, as it was the habit of the devout Israelite, to be continually bringing oblations to his God.

How is this to be done? That is the point. We have need, each of us, to say with Paul, "Lord, what will You have me to do?" And we may add another question, "How will You have me do it?" For will-worship is not acceptable with God. If we bring to God what He does not ask, it will not be received. We must only present to Him that which He requires of us and we must present it to Him in His own way, for He is a jealous God.

I call your attention to the fact that, in this verse, the Lord three times expressly commands that with the meat offerings and all other offerings they were to offer salt. Does the great God that made Heaven and earth talk about salt? Does He condescend to such minute details of His service as to enact that the absence of a handful of salt shall render a sacrifice unacceptable—and the presence of it shall be absolutely necessary to its being received by Him? Then, my Brethren, nothing in the service of God is trifling! A pinch of salt may seem to us exceedingly unimportant, but before the Lord it may not be so. In the service of God, the alteration of an ordinance of Christ may seem to be a pure matter of indifference, and yet in that alteration there may be the taking away of the very vitals of the ordinance—and the total destruction of its meaning. It is yours and it is mine to keep to the letter of God's Word, as well as to the spirit of it, remembering that it is written, "Whoever shall break one of these least commandments and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven." It is not for the servant to say, "This order of my master is unimportant and the other is binding." The servant's duty is to act in all things exactly as he is bid. Since our Master is so holy and so wise, it is impossible for us to improve upon His commandments. Yes, God enters into detail with His servants and even makes orders about salt.

If you will read the chapter through, you will note that other things were needed in connection with the sacrifices of the Israelites. Their sacrifices were, of course, imperfect. Even on the low ground which they occupied as symbols and emblems they were not com-

plete, for you read, in the first place, that they needed frankincense when they offered their sacrifice to God. God did not smell sweet savor in the bullock, or the ram, or the lamb, unless sweet spices were added. What does that teach us but that the best performances of our hands must not appear before His Throne without the merit of Christ mingled with it? There must be that mixture of myrrh, aloes and cassia with which the garments of our Prince are perfumed to make our sacrifice to be a sweet savor to the Most High! Take care in your sacrifices that you bring the sacred frankincense.

Another thing that was enjoined constantly was that they should bring oil—and oil is always the type of the blessed Spirit of God. What is the use of a sermon if there is no unction in it? What is unction but the Holy Spirit? What is prayer without the anointing that comes of the Holy Spirit? What is praise unless the Spirit of God is in it to give it life, that it may rise to Heaven? That which goes to God must first come from God. We need the oil—we cannot do without

it. Pray for me that I may have this oil in the sacrifice of my ministry, as I pray for you that in all that you do for the Lord Jesus, your sacrifice may continually have the sacred oil with it.

Then came a third requisite, namely, salt. If you read the preceding verses, you will see that the Lord forbids them to present any honey. "No meat offering, which you shall bring unto the Lord, shall be made with leaven: for you shall burn no leaven, nor any honey, in an offering of the Lord made by fire. As for the oblation of the first fruits, you shall offer them unto the Lord: but they shall not be burnt on the altar for a sweet savor." Ripe fruits were full of honey, full of sweetness—and God does not ask for sweetness, He asks for salt. I shall notice that as we go on farther. Not honey, but salt, must be added to all the sacrifices which we present before the living God.

What is the meaning of all this? We may not pronounce any meaning of the types with certainty unless we have Scripture to direct us, but still, using our best judgment, we do, first of all, see that the text explains itself. Observe, "neither shall you suffer the salt of the Covenant of your God to be lacking from your meat offering."

I. It appears, then, that salt was THE SYMBOL OF THE COVENANT. When God made a Covenant with David, it

is written, "The Lord gave the kingdom to David forever by a Covenant of salt"—by which was meant that it was an unchangeable, incorruptible Covenant which would endure as salt makes a thing to endure, so that it is not liable to putrefy or corrupt. "The salt of the Covenant" signifies that whenever you and I are bringing any offering to the Lord, we must take care that we remember the Covenant. Standing at the altar with our gift, serving God with our daily service, as I trust we are doing, let us continually offer the salt of the Covenant with all our sacrifices. Here is a man who is doing good works in order to be saved. You are under the wrong Covenant, my Friend, you are under the Covenant of Works and all that

you will gain in that way is a curse, for, "Cursed is everyone that continues not in all things which are written in the Book of the Law, to do them." "Therefore," says the Apostle, "as many as are of the works of the Law are under the curse." Get away from that and get to that other Covenant which has salt in it, namely, the Covenant of Grace, the New Covenant of which Christ is the Head! We must not come to God without the salt of faith in Christ, or our offerings will be a sort of antichrist. A man who is trying to save himself is in opposition to the Savior. He that thinks of the merits of his own good works, despises the merit of the finished work of Christ! He is offering to God that which has no salt with it and it cannot be received.

We need this salt of the Covenant in all that we do, in the first place, to preserve us from falling into legality. He that serves God for wages forgets the Word—"The gift of God is eternal life." It is not wage, but gift, by which you are to live. If you forget that you are under a Covenant of pure Grace, in which God gives to the unworthy and saves those who have no claim to any Covenant blessing, you will get on legal ground. And, once on legal ground, God cannot accept your sacrifice. With all your offerings you shall offer the salt of the Covenant of Grace, lest you are guilty of legality in your offering.

The Covenant is to be remembered, also, that it may excite gratitude. Whenever I think of God entering into Covenant that He will not depart from me and that I shall never depart from Him, my love to Him overflows. Nothing constrains me to such activity and such zeal, in the cause of God, as a sense of Covenant love. Oh, the gratitude one feels for everything which comes to us by the Covenant of Grace! Remember the old Scottish wife who thanked God for the porridge and then thanked Him that she had a Covenant right to the porridge, since He had said, "Verily, you shall be fed"? Oh, it makes life very sweet to take everything from the hands of a Covenant God and to see in every mercy a new pledge of Covenant faithfulness! It makes life happy and it also inspires a Believer to do great things for his gracious God. Standing on Covenant ground we feel consecrated to the noblest ends!

This tends to awaken our devotion to God. When we remember that God has entered into Covenant with us, then we do not do our work for Him in a cold, chilly, dead way—neither do we perform it after a nominal, formal sort—for we say, "I am one of God's covenanted ones." He has made an everlasting Covenant with me, ordered in all things and sure; therefore my very soul goes after Him and this which I am about to do, though it is only to sing a hymn, or to bow my knees in prayer, shall be done intensely, as by one who is in covenant with God, who is, therefore, bound to serve with all his heart and with all his soul, and with all his strength. Covenanted service should be the best of service. The covenanted saints of old stopped not at death, itself, for Him to whom they were bound!

My time will not allow me to enlarge, but I pray the people of God will always keep the Covenant in view. That Covenant will claim the last accent of our tongues on earth. It shall employ the first notes of our celestial songs. Where

are you if you are out of Covenant with God? You are under the curse of the Old Covenant if you are not under the blessing of the New! But if the Lord Jesus Christ has stood Surety on your behalf and made the Covenant sure to you, you will serve God with alacrity and delight—and He will accept your service as a sweet savor offering in Christ Jesus. That is the first meaning of the text.

II. But, secondly, salt is THE TOKEN OF COMMUNION. In the East, especially, it is the token of fellowship. When an Oriental has once eaten a man's salt, he will do him no harm.

Whenever you are attempting to serve God, take care that you do it in the spirit of fellowship with God. Take care that you suffer not this salt to be lacking from your meat-offering. Offer it in fellowship with God.

And this is a very important point, though I cannot dwell upon it at any length. Beloved, we never serve God rightly, joyfully, happily, if we get out of fellowship with Him. "His servants shall serve Him and they shall see His face." There is no serving God acceptably unless you see His face. Once you feel your love to God dying out and the Presence of God withdrawn from you, you can live by faith, but you cannot work with comfort. You must feel a sweet friendship with God or else you will not so heartily give yourself to God's service as the saints of God ought to do. I want you to live always in the sense of God's nearness to you. Live always in the delightful conviction that God loves you. Never be satisfied to have a doubt about your being one with Christ, or that you are dear to the heart of God. You cannot sing, you cannot pray, you cannot teach a Sunday school class—you cannot preach in a fit and proper style if you lose this salt of communion! You may limp, but you cannot run in the ways of God if your fellowship is broken. "The joy of the Lord is your strength." Have plenty of this salt of fellowship to heap upon every oblation.

Then, feel fellowship with God as to all His purposes. Does God wish to save souls? So do I. Did Christ die to save souls? So would I live to save them. Can you say that? Does the Holy Spirit strive against sin? So would I strive against sin. Feel all this. Endeavor to run on parallel lines with God as far as the creature can keep pace with the Creator. And when you do—when all your aims and designs are the aims and designs of God—then, Brother, you will plow and you will sow—and you will reap with joy and gladness of heart! There must be this fellowship with God in His designs. This is the essential salt of sacrifice.

I would have you especially have fellowship with God in Christ Jesus. Does God love Jesus? So do we. Does God desire the Glory of His Son? So do we. Does God determine that His Son shall put down all power, authority, rule and be King? We, too, wish Him to reign over us and over all mankind. "Your Kingdom come" is our prayer, even as it is God's will that the kingdoms of this world should become the Kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ.

Now, if you can always work in fellowship with God, what a grand thing it will be! For lack of this, many workers know not their position and never realize their strength. We are

laborers together with God. If we are in our right state, we take a brick to lay it on the wall and a Divine hand has lifted that brick. We use the trowel and it is the great Master Builder that grasps the tool. We wield the sword and the Captain of the Lord's host is strengthening our arm and guiding our hand that we may do valiantly in the day of battle. What an honor to have the Lord working with us and by us!

But oh, Beloved, do not get out of fellowship with God! If you have done so, before you do another stroke of work for Him go and get into fellowship with Him. If I were captain of the host and I saw that you were out of fellowship and yet you were marching to the battle, I would say, "Brother, go back." When we bring our sacrifice, we are to leave it till we are reconciled to our brother—and much more must we leave it till we have a sense of being reconciled to God. I cannot go on serving God if I do not know that I am His child. I cannot go on preaching to you if I have any doubt of my own salvation. At any rate, it would be very wretched work to preach of freedom while myself in chains! He preaches best who is at liberty and can, in his own person, tell the captives how Christ makes men free. When you know that you are in union with God—and when your heart feels a blessed friendship to Him—then it is, dear Friends, that your oblation will come up acceptably before Him and you can do your work as it ought to be done before Him.

III. But I must get your minds to another point. Salt is the EMBLEM OF SINCERITY. "With all your offerings you shall offer salt." There must be an intense sincerity about all we do towards God.

I bade you note that you were not allowed to present honey before the Lord. I really wish that some of our Brethren who are over-done with honey, would notice that. There is a kind of molasses godliness which I can never stomach. It is always, "Dear this," and, "Dear that," and, "Dear the other," and, "This dear man," and, "That dear woman." There is also a kind of honey-drop talk in which a person never speaks the plain truth. He speaks as familiarly as if he knew all

about you and would lay down his life for you, though he has never set eyes on you before and would not give you a halfpenny to save your life! These people avoid rebuking sin, for that is "unkind." They avoid denouncing error. They say, "This dear Brother's views differ slightly from mine." A man says that black is white and I say that it is not so. But it is not kind to say, "It is not so." You should say, "Perhaps you are right, dear Brother, though I hardly think so." In this style some men think that our sacrifice is to be offered! If they hear a sermon that cuts at the roots of sin and deals honestly with error, they say, "That man is very narrow-minded."

Well, I have been so accustomed to be called a bigot that I, by no means, deny the charge! I feel no horror because of the accusation. To tell a man that if he goes on in his sin, he will be lost forever and to preach to him the Hell which God denounces against the impenitent is no unkindness! It is the truest kindness to deal honestly with men. If the surgeon knows

very well that a person has a disease about him that requires the knife and he only says, "It is a mere trifle: I dare say that with a little medicine and a pill or two we may cure you," a simpleton may say, "What a dear kind man!" But a wise man judges otherwise. He is not kind, for he is a liar! If, instead of that, he says "My dear Friend, I am very sorry, but I must tell you that this mischief must be taken out by the roots and, painful as the operation is, I beg you to summon courage to undergo it, for it must be done if your life is to be saved."

That is a very unpleasant kind of person and a very narrow-minded and bigoted person—but he is the man for us! He uses salt and God accepts him—the other man uses honey and God will have nothing to do with him. When honey comes to the fire, it turns sour. All this pretended sweetness, when it comes to the test, turns sour—there is no real love in it. But the salt, which is sharp and when it gets into the wound makes it tingle, nevertheless does sound service.

Whenever you come before God with your sacrifices, do not come with the pretence of a love you do not feel, nor with the beautiful nonsense of hypocrites, but come before the Lord in real, sober, earnest truth. If you are wrong and feel it, say so, and out with it! And if God has made you right through His Spirit, do not deny it, lest you deny the work of the Holy Spirit and so dishonor Him.

What is meant is that in all our sacrifices we ought to bring our hearts with us. If we sing, let us sing heartily as unto the Lord—not with our voices only, but with our very souls! If we preach, let us preach with all our might—we have such precious Truth to handle that it ought not to be dealt with in a trifling manner. If we try to win a soul, let us throw our whole strength into the work. Though we would not scheme, like the Pharisees, to make a proselyte to our sect, yet let us compass sea and land to bring a man to Christ, for such we should do.

And when we bring our heart and throw it intensely into the service of God, which is one form of the salt, let us take care that all we do is spiritually performed—not done with the external hand, or lips, or eyes, but done with the soul, with the innermost heart of our being! Otherwise it will be mere flesh and, without salt, it will be viewed as corrupt and rejected at God's altar.

When you attempt to pray and rise from your knees feeling that you have not prayed, then do not leave the Mercy Seat, but pray till you pray! When you are singing a hymn and do not feel quite in tune for singing, sing yourself into tune! Do not leave an ordinance till you have tasted the salt of that ordinance. I admire that resolution of John Bradford the martyr. He said that he made a rule that he never ceased from a holy engagement till he had entered into the spirit of it. Too often we treat these things lightly. There is no soul in them and yet we are satisfied with them. We eat our unsavory devotions without salt—and the Lord rejects them. We have had a few minutes in prayer in the morning and, perhaps, just a few weary minutes at midnight. We have run through a chapter, or perhaps we have taught

a class on the Sabbath afternoon and taught it perfunctorily without any life and yet we have been content. Or we have preached, but it has been a mere saying of words—there has been no life or vigor in it.

Oh, do not so! Bring not to God your unsalted sacrifices, but let the salt of sincerity savor all. It is better to say, "I did not pray," than it is to say, "I did pray," and yet only to have gone through a form. It is better to have to confess, "I did not sing," than to follow the tune when your heart is not in it. You had better leave off the external form than keep it up if your soul is not in it—lest you be found to mock the Most High God! Pile on the salt! Let it season the whole of your sacrifice through and through! Be sincere before the heart-searching God.

IV. Lastly, salt is THE TYPE OF PURIFYING POWER and with all our sacrifices we have need to bring a great deal of this salt. The salt eats into the meat. It drives away corruption. It preserves it. We require a deal of this. Brothers and Sisters, if we come before God with holy things while we are living in sin, we need not deceive ourselves—we shall

not be accepted! If there is any man of whom it can be said that he is a saint abroad and a devil at home, God will estimate him at what he is at home—and not at what he is abroad. He may lay the sacrifice upon the altar, but if it is brought there with foul hands and an unholy heart, God will have nothing to do with it! "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord" and, certainly, without holiness can no man serve the Lord. We have our imperfections, but known and willful sin, God's people will not indulge. From this God keeps them. As soon as they know a thing to be sin and their attention is called to it, that which they have committed in inadvertence causes them grief and sorrow of heart and they flee from it with all their souls.

But do not be deceived! You may be a great man in the Church of God and hold office there—and even be a leader— but if you lead an unholy life, neither you nor your sacrifice can ever be accepted by the Most High. God abhors that His priests should serve Him with unwashed hands and feet. "Be you clean that bear the vessels of the Lord." I constantly preach to you free, rich and Sovereign Grace without the slightest condition—and I preach the same at this time. But remember that the Grace of God brings sanctification with it and that the gift of God is deliverance from sin—and if we abide in sin and remain in it, we cannot be the children of God! We must, dear Friends, bring with all our oblations that salt in ourselves which shall purify our hearts from inward corruption and which shall have a power about it to purify others. Know you not that the saints are the salt of the earth? And if we are salt to others, we must have salt in ourselves. How can we conquer sin in others if sin is unconquered in ourselves? How can we give a light we have never seen? How can we have seed as sowers if we have never had bread as eaters?

You know what the woman said concerning the well—"Father Jacob," she said, "gave us the well and drank thereof himself." You cannot give other people wells if you do not drink from this yourself! You cannot benefit a man by Grace if you are not first benefited

by Grace yourself. Can anything come out of a man that is not in him? There must be a holy, sanctifying power about the child of God, making him to be as salt, or else he cannot act upon the putrid masses round him as the salt ought to do.

With all your oblations, then, bring this salt. God give it to us! Let us cry to Him for it! I bless God for this Church that God has made you a power in the neighborhood—that God is making you a power all over this country! Those hundreds of ministers who came up this week, whom we have educated here and whom all of you have helped to educate—are not these a purifying salt? Our Brothers and Sisters by thousands are scattered all over the world. Not a week passes without some of our number going far away and I always say, "Yes, go, dear Brethren. Salt should not remain in the box. It ought to be scattered all over the meat. Wherever you go, mind that you are salt, so that people do not say, 'Is this one of the Tabernacle people? He is a poor, lukewarm creature.'" Do not have it so, but do, now that God blesses you so largely, take care that the salt is in you all.

"I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth" and I have no greater sorrow than this—that there are some among you who are no credit to your profession. There are some among you who do not live, even, as well as the world expects you to live. I mean not only poor ones, but rich ones among us are a dishonor to us. There are a few of all degrees among us who are not spiritually-minded but are worldly and carnal. They come to this place and sit among us with their faces turned towards Heaven while they, themselves, are going the way of the ungodly. They know what I mean while I speak it! God grant that they may bear the rebuke—and repent and turn to the Lord! They are looking one way and rowing another—trying to be the people of God, if they can, and yet, at the same time, acting as common sinners act!

The Lord bless you, Beloved, by making you all holy! And if you will not be holy, may He take that great fan into His hand and blow the chaff away! If it cannot be that this shall be a pure heap lying upon His floor to His honor and Glory, then may He still continue that great purgation which is always going on in every Church where He is really present! Brothers and Sisters, we must be holy! We must be holy, or else cease to be what we are. God bring us to this—that with every oblation we may offer huge handfuls of salt! May we always be accepted in Christ, accepted with our sweet savor—holy, acceptable to God because His Spirit has made us holy and keeps us right before Him. The Lord bless you always! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Ephesians 4. HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—386, 623, 435.

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON

DEAR FRIENDS—The severe weather in England has induced the officers of the Church at the Tabernacle to persuade me to remain in this sheltered spot for another week. I was reluctant to do this, but, at length, feeling myself very weak, I judged it to be the best economy

to take the further rest. The little meditation at the Lord's table, which is here given, will be followed by a similar one next week. And after that I hope to deliver the Word from my own pulpit. Again I beg my Readers' prayers that I may return strong for service, anointed for high enterprise. With kindest regards to the thousands of my Brothers and Sisters.

Yours to serve.

Mentone, January 16, 1887.