

The Gospel According to  
**Luke**

**“Saltiness is Next to Godliness”**

Chapter 14:25-35

Introduction

Imagine this situation. You have been hired to perform a job, are finished, and are ready to receive your salary. Your supervisor, who has been more than satisfied with your work, hands you a bag of **salt**.

Would you be satisfied with this salary, or would you be offended and even outraged? If you were a Roman soldier, you would be very satisfied. You would have just received the normal income of a Roman soldier.

The payment given to the soldier was called *salarim argentums*. It's where we get our English word, *salary*. In later Imperial Rome, the bag of salt was replaced by a monetary allowance, the purpose of which was to enable the soldier to purchase his salt. This is why we sometimes still say that a person is *worth his salt*.

Salt was once one of the most valuable commodities on earth – traded ounce-for-ounce with gold. For one thing, salt was one of the few preservatives available. It preserved fish, meat, olives, cheese, and pickled vegetables throughout the year everywhere in the world. There are, in fact, some 14,000 known uses for salt. Salt meant something far different, and far greater, than it does to us in our technologically advanced age of electricity and refrigeration.

There is a lot more we could say about salt; but this should be enough for you to better appreciate what Jesus had to say in our text. His comments in this section build-up to His conclusion in verses thirty-four and thirty-five. In those closing verses, He compares Christians to salt. You can be salt that *retains* its flavor; or you can be salt that *relinquishes* its flavor.

**You obviously want to be salt that retains its flavor!** Jesus tells you just how you can retain your flavor in a series of principles and parables.

We'll organize our thoughts around two points: #1 There Are Things You Must Forsake In Order To Retain Your Salt Flavor, and #2 There Are Things You Must Foresee In Order To Retain Your Salt Flavor.

#1 There Are Things You Must Forsake  
In Order To Retain Your Salt Flavor  
(v34-35; 25-27 & 33)

The best place to start in this section is with the conclusion, in verses thirty-four and thirty-five. We miss so much of what Jesus was saying because of our own experience with salt. Not only do we rarely think of salt as being valuable; we've been taught by medical professionals to see it as harmful. We need to put ourselves back in the first century, hearing this the way Jesus' followers would have heard and understood it.

Luke 14:34 "Salt is good; but if the salt has lost its flavor, how shall it be seasoned?"

**Salt is good.** Sounds almost like a copyrighted marketing slogan! Try telling it to your doctor.

**Salt is good**, especially in their time and culture. I already mentioned one of its 14,000 uses – to preserve foods. Let me list a few more:

1. Salt heals. You've probably heard the phrase, *pouring salt on a wound*. Before the days of iodine and other antiseptics salt was used to protect a wound from infection.
2. Salt nourishes. Our bodies need many nutrients to keep them healthy. Salt is one of them. With too much or too little salt our bodily systems would get out of kilter, but with just the right amount of salt our bodies retain enough water to maintain equilibrium. (By the way, here is something interesting. This chapter began with Jesus healing a man from dropsy, which we said was the condition we call *edema*. Edema is water retention. It is a symptom of an underlying condition. One condition that can

cause edema is kidney failure, and it's because the kidneys cannot process the salt in your diet!).

3. Salt seasons. Some use it sparingly; others pile it on; but all agree it has value as a flavoring.

You can take each of these uses or properties of salt and make a spiritual comparison:

1. Like salt, Christians act as a preservative in society, inhibiting its decay.
2. Like salt, Christians should promote spiritual health and healing.
3. Like salt, Christians should provide nourishment.
4. Like salt, Christians should season their environment. For example: The Bible says your speech should always be gracious, **seasoned with salt, that you may know how to answer every man** (Colossians 4:6).

You want to be good, *salty* salt! But some salt, Jesus said, **loses its flavor**. First century salt was unrefined. In the holy land, it was gathered mostly from the shores of the Dead Sea, also called the Salt Sea.

Unrefined salt **loses its flavor** when it is diluted with other earthly elements. **Comparing salt to the Christian, we would say that you lose your salt flavor and thereby become ineffective because of earthly things you add to your life which dilute your walk with the Lord.**

**Luke 14:35** It is neither fit for the land nor for the dunghill, *but men throw it out. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!*"

Salt had application on **land** as a weed killer; but it was, and is, still used as a fertilizer for certain crops. Or Jesus may be referring to the still-common practice of putting out salt for livestock to lick.

As for the **dunghill**, salt is reported by some to have been used to facilitate the breaking-down of waste. At any rate, salt that was no longer salty was good for nothing but to be **thrown out**.

I want you to notice something important: Jesus said that **men throw... out** useless, ineffective salt. Applying this to ourselves means that you do not cease being a Christian; **God doesn't throw you out**. You lose your effectiveness upon men.

Jesus strongly exhorted us to **hear** what He was saying. He was saying, *Retain your flavor! Stay salty!* Which brings us to the principles and parables. In the first set you learn there are things you must forsake in order to retain your salt flavor. The first is your **family**:

Luke 14:25 Now great multitudes went with Him. And He turned and said to them,

Luke 14:26 “If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple.

In every **multitude** there are believers and nonbelievers. Among believers, there are those who coast, and those who commit, when it comes to discipleship. Jesus' comments explain to you what is required of a believer who desires to quit coasting and commit to really following Him as a disciple.

You have to **hate** your **father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters...** He really means it; but just what is meant by **hate**?

The Bible never contradicts itself. In other places, you are clearly instructed, even commanded, to love and honor your father and mother, your wife and kids, your brothers and sisters. In fact, **you are even told to love your enemies!**

The answer to what Jesus meant is simple, and it's obvious to anyone who has become a Christian. You get saved; you fall in love with Jesus. You tell your family. How do they respond? In many cases, they respond **as if** you hated them because you love Jesus more. They act like you've turned your back on them – especially if they are involved in a religion. You seem to them to love Jesus, and other Christians, more than your own natural family.

If you are going to really commit to Jesus, as His disciple, you cannot allow your family to interfere with your walk with the Lord. You cannot succumb to their pressure to compromise and otherwise hang back in your commitment. If you do, **you will lose your salt flavor** – doing neither them nor yourself nor anyone else any spiritual good.

The second thing you must forsake to retain your salt flavor is **your own life**:

**Luke 14:26** “If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, **and his own life also**, he cannot be My disciple.

What does this mean? Jesus explained it by what He said next:

**Luke 14:27** And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.

Forget any psychobabble you might be thinking of in terms of the dangers of low self-esteem, or the negative effects of self-hate. By **hate** your own life, Jesus means you daily **bear** your **cross**. A person who bore their cross was someone on their way to being crucified. The State – in their case, the Roman government – had assumed authority over their life, and sentenced them to forfeit their life for the good of society.

A Christian disciple is someone who has freely given Jesus authority over your life. You have forfeited all your rights in order to serve the Lord in whatever capacity, in whatever circumstances, in whatever city, through whatever suffering, He has determined. Your life is not yours; it is His, to do with it what pleases Him.

If that sounds scary, just remember that this Person Who has authority is Jesus – Who loved you so much He bore His own cross for **you!** When you keep Him in mind, it doesn't seem unusual at all that you would entrust your dreams, desires, plans, and priorities to Him.

Drop down to verse thirty-three, which summarizes the things you must forsake in order to retain your salt flavor:

Luke 14:33 So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple.

Your family, and even your own life, are just two examples. You must **forsake all** that you have to follow Jesus as His **disciple**.

There is a debate among Christians as to whether or not you can even be saved if you do not **forsake all**. In other words, Is it possible or impossible to be a Christian but not be a disciple?

Without going into all the arguments, I believe it is all too possible to be saved, to be a Christian, but to fall short in being a disciple. ***I fall short in being a disciple!*** I don't want to, but I do.

All disciples are believers; but not all believers are disciples. What I will say is this: If you find yourself relieved that you can coast, rather than commit, to discipleship, there is something very wrong with your relationship with the Lord. It may be that you are not a believer. But, if you are, how sad that the Savior Who loved you while you were yet a sinner; Who died for you; Who has given you life and hope; is Someone Who you want to insulate and isolate yourself from, because of a few earthly relationships or your own selfish goals for this temporary existence.

It almost sounds like Jesus doesn't want many disciples. *That's not true!* Quite the opposite is true: He wants you to commit to being His disciple. To encourage you, He told two parables.

## #2 There Are Things You Must Foresee In Order To Retain Your Salt Flavor (v28-32)

The two parables have in common that they involve *foresight* – looking ahead to the consequences of your decision to either coast or commit to discipleship. Jesus wants you to have the foresight to not be like the failed tower-builder; and He wants you to have the foresight to be like the fighting king.

Have the foresight to not be like the failed tower-builder:

Luke 14:28 For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has *enough* to finish *it* -

Luke 14:29 lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see *it* begin to mock him,

Luke 14:30 saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.'

This is obvious. He should have counted the cost, not started unless he knew he could finish.

(By the way: As obvious as that sounds, it is the exact opposite of almost every church building project!).

We usually apply this by saying we must count the cost of being a disciple. It seems to me more likely that this is describing the cost of **not** being a disciple! Here is what I mean:

1. Let's say you are not a believer, and therefore not a disciple. Does it really ultimately matter what you build or accomplish? From an eternal standpoint, what you build can never be finished, because it has no value in eternity. Even if it is finished from an earthly perspective, it will one day be destroyed – when the Lord creates a new earth and a new heaven.
2. Let's say you are a believer, but don't want to commit yourself to discipleship. If you do not follow God's plan for your life, you will never build the family, or the ministry, or the career, that He intended for you. Your life's work will be unfinished. And you won't have much of a testimony while you're doing it. Others will **mock you** – because you spoke of eternity, but lived for earthly things.

Apply spiritual foresight. Look forward, and realize you will one day stand before Jesus. Why should everything you've done go up in smoke, when you could be investing in the future?

The fighting king in the next parable had foresight:

Luke 14:31 Or what king, going to make war against another king, does not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand?

Luke 14:32 Or else, while the other is still a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks conditions of peace.

The stronger king, with the larger army, is going to prevail. The king had foresight, and it prevented him from acting foolishly, and bringing defeat and destruction upon him and his kingdom.

What if, in this parable, the stronger king represents God, and the inevitable coming of His kingdom on earth? If that be the case – **you'd better make peace with Him, rather than war against Him!**

1. Let's say you are not a believer. *You are at war with God!* You'd better make peace with Him before it's too late. A day is coming when every knee will bow, and every tongue confess, that Jesus is Lord.
2. Let's say you are a believer, but **don't** want to commit yourself to discipleship. You are also, in a sense, fighting against God. In the Book of James, with some boldness, the author says, *do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God* (James 4:4). So it is possible for you – **as a believer** – to fight against God.

It's a fight you shouldn't be in, and cannot win! Look ahead, to the glory that you will share in heaven when you are there with Jesus. If you live *backwards*, from your mansion in heaven, you will look *forward* to it, and want to commit your life wholly and totally to the Lord.

In both these cases – the tower-builder and the king – the key was foresight. The things you foresee can help you retain your salt flavor. Without spiritual foresight, you become diluted with the world, and lose your flavor.

### Applying the Word

If you are not a believer... **You are not salt at all!** Jesus bore the Cross for you. He died so you might have life.

Most of you are believers; you've received Jesus Christ. The question for us to ask yourself is: *Have I forsaken all?*



You can start answering the question by taking a look at the two areas Jesus highlighted: Your family, and your own life. Then keep asking it, day-by-day, until the coming of the Lord.

We sometimes make discipleship so hard that we can never hope to reach our goals. Let's get practical. I want to suggest a few simple 'salty' things, looking at your home, your work, and your Church.

**At home:** What is keeping you from spending fifteen minutes with Jesus - either in the morning or at night? Are you reading Christian literature? On your way to and from work, are you listening to Christ-centered music and programming?

**At work (or at school, as your case may be):** What is keeping you from letting folks know you are a Christian? Can you bring your Bible to work? Can you wear, or display, Christian symbols or literature? Can you bring a stack of invites? If there are other believers there – Do you meet with them, to pray about how you can best reach the nonbelievers?

**At Church:** How committed are you to attend? If you miss a Sunday morning, do you get the CD and listen to the message? What is keeping you from coming to Wednesday evening Bible study? If you can't come Wednesday, why aren't you getting the Wednesday CD?

None of these things puts a burden on you; any of them would bless you!