

Losing Your Saltiness
Luke 14:34-35

The truths that our Lord teaches us within these scriptures are timeless. And that is especially so as He teaches us about the wisdom and the holiness and the righteousness that He is able to give to those of us who will yield our hearts to Him.

In 1 Corinthians chapter 1 we are told that it is “of God that Christ Jesus has become in us wisdom, holiness, righteousness and redemption.

And also in 1 Corinthians chapter 2 we read,

“No eye has seen,
no ear has heard,
no mind has conceived
what God has prepared for those who love him”—

¹⁰ but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. (1 Corinthians 2:9-10)

And folks, all of this truly is ours to have and to enjoy if and as we yield our hearts and our lives to the Lord Jesus.

And this was what our Lord was teaching to the crowds of followers that would gather to Him each day. But also, and very importantly, Jesus was saying these things to the Jewish leadership of His day, the Scribes and the Pharisees. And then warning them that they must hang on tightly to the truths that they had been learning, else all that they had gained in all their many years of learning would be lost to them.

In our passage for today given to us in Luke chapter 14, Jesus had been explaining to the people in the crowd who had been following Him about a real and true cost that they must be willing to pay if they really did want the eternal life He had been telling them about. And as He most often did, He spoke some of His words directly to the Jewish leadership, the Scribes and the Pharisees, who were present within those crowds.

Here in verses 34 and 35, Jesus used a common example that most all of those listening could understand, especially those people who were most experienced in their faith, and especially the Jewish leaders who were in the crowd, warning each of them that the journey of eternal life was a long and

often difficult one, warning them that should they falter in their faith, the consequences would be worse than they could imagine. Listen to these words, simple in their understanding but profound in their meaning!

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

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!" (Luke 14:34-35)

Words like these bring to mind one of the doctrinal differences that often gets argued between those of us who are Baptist and Presbyterian and those who are Methodist and Pentecostal, the question of whether or not a person can lose their salvation once they are truly saved.

If you are of the Methodist or the Pentecostal persuasion, these words of the Lord Jesus simply confirm what you believe, that yes, this means that some people can lose their salvation.

But if you are of the Baptist or of the Presbyterian persuasion, then this simply means that our Lord is telling us about people who might have been very religious in their behaviors but were not truly saved to begin with.

Perhaps a third understanding can also be gained, that these words are simply a warning to each of us that we must not hesitate or hold back in our pursuit of working out the salvation that the Lord Jesus has worked into our souls, that if we do not move on forward in our faith, we will surely be "unfruitful", not bearing the blessed fruit that comes to us through the "Vine of Christ".

And yes, our Lord's words are for any and all people who begin a journey of faith with Him. And these words seem especially to be for those of us who have walked with our Lord for a long time, warning us to be careful to tightly hold onto the faith that we have, that if we falter, we can become like that salt that has lost its saltiness, not helpful or beneficial to anyone, the Lord, other people, and especially ourselves.

And while yes, our Lord's warnings are for all of us, these particular words follow closely along after some of the other warnings that He had been giving to the religious leaders of His day, the Scribes and the Pharisees.

And I would like to spend much of our study today on a similar problem that seems to have taken hold within the hearts and the lives of some of the religious leaders of our own day.

Those of us who are old enough to remember will recall the successes and then the failures of some of the most prominent of church leaders of recent times past, Jim Bakker, Jimmy Swaggart, Ted Haggard and others. Each of them, when caught in their behaviors expressed regret and even to some extent repentance. Some of them even attempted to submit to their church's discipline, but I am not aware if the results were effectual or not.

I can recall the seemingly joyous response by the national news media. They seemed to really love reporting the bad news about the fallen saints. They made a public spectacle out of each of those men, revealing their sins to the whole world, proving out the scriptures in Luke chapter 12 that tell us,

2 Nothing is covered up that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. 3 Therefore whatever you have said in the dark shall be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in private rooms shall be proclaimed on the housetops. (Luke 12:2-3)

And those kinds of failures are continuing on into our most recent of days. Some of our most prominent of church leaders seem to have experienced a loss in their "saltiness" and are falling by the wayside. And again, with the national media seeming to gleefully splash the damning reports out over their news programs.

And some of those reports have been personally painful to me. I truly loved to hear some of those men preach and teach, only to find out that they had a darker, more corrupt side hidden within their souls.

One of my favorite preachers was Ravi Zacharias. I so enjoyed his preaching and especially his debates with many within the unbelieving world, especially with some of the most well-known atheists like Richard Dawkins.

More recently, and especially painful to me was when Tony Evans stepped down from his ministry, saying that he had committed no crime, but had committed sin. And further that he was submitting himself to the discipline of his church.

Again, this is very sad for me because I have enjoyed and benefitted from the teaching and the preaching of Tony Evans for many years. Our hearts are broken when our “spiritual heroes” falter.

Even more recently, Robert Morris, the pastor of what is reputed to be one of the largest churches in our nation, Gateway Church in Dallas, announced that he was stepping down as pastor. He admitted to having been involved in an immoral relationship several years ago and it was just now coming to light.

That too is such a painful circumstance. I have friends who work with this man in his ministry and it is very difficult for them. But still the words of these scriptures are being proven out,

2 Nothing is covered up that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. 3 Therefore whatever you have said in the dark shall be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in private rooms shall be proclaimed on the housetops. (Luke 12:2-3)

A question that often comes to our minds at times like this is, “Is this satan attacking these men, or is this simply the sinful nature of these men at work? Or perhaps, is this God’s way of making sure that our sins do find us out?” Perhaps, to some degree, it is all of those combined!

This brings to mind the questions that we asked at the beginning of today’s study, “Were these men ever truly saved?” If they were, “did they lose their salvation?” or, “was this a temporary faltering in their faith?”

Another question for us is . . . “Is our consideration of these men’s plight a proper thing to do in a public way? Should we talk openly about their shame or should we simply cover it over and say no more about it?”

There are examples within these scriptures where we find both of those responses taking place, depending upon the circumstance involved.

We know that above all else, true repentance is God’s real desired response from each of us, and especially for those among us who succumb to temptations like these, else the “salt” within us will lose its “saltiness” completely. And we also know that God will use whatever circumstances necessary, especially public shame, to bring His children back to their knees in repentance.

That was especially true with God's beloved servant King David, a Godly man, one described as a "Man after God's own heart", but who, for a while, fell into his own pit of immorality, and for that while, lost his "saltiness".

In 2 Samuel 11, we are able to observe King David's step by step venture into some of the worst of conduct. And yes, God did allow David's behavior to become public, so public that it is recorded and publicized here in these texts for us to see thousands of years later.

Why did God do that? He did that for many reasons, the first of which is to show each of us that no matter how close we draw into God's presence, the "residue" of our sinful nature is still present and we are able to be tempted.

And further, God wants us to know that satan, the great tempter, is an ever-stalking predator, roaming to and fro, seeking whom he may devour, bringing otherwise innocent people into contact with each other in compromising ways for the purpose of temptation.

And that was especially so with David and Bathsheba. These scriptures give us no reason to believe that Bathsheba intended any form of sin, and initially, neither did David. But by their simply allowing themselves to be in the wrong place at the wrong time, they gave temptation its opportunity.

David, by not being where he was supposed to be, set himself up for a possible failure. These words of 2 Samuel 11 tell us that this was the time of year when Kings were supposed to go out to battle, but David did not go out with his men. He instead stayed home, setting the stage for the temptation that took place, the opportunity for lazing around the house, venturing out onto the balcony and catching sight of a beautiful woman bathing on a nearby rooftop.

Folks, let me remind us again of one other ugly part of this sin that David stumbled into. From the words used in the passage of 2 Samuel 11 describing David's first encounter with Bathsheba, it might seem as if David did not know Bathsheba very well. But a closer consideration of all the circumstances tells us that they most likely knew each other well.

In another portion of these scriptures, Bathsheba's husband Uriah is mentioned as being one of David's "Mighty Men". And then also, because of the close

proximity of Uriah's house to the King's palace, we have every reason to assume that there was a close and trusted relationship.

What should David have done when he viewed the beautiful woman taking her bath? He should have done as his ancestor Joseph did when tempted with the possibility of sin with Potiphar's wife. He should have fled, ran as quickly as he could run from the sin.

But David did not run. He instead stumbled, step by step, into the quagmire of adultery, deception, and eventually, murder, all along the way, losing more and more of his "saltiness".

But thankfully, David's story does eventually have a good ending. After all that David did wrong, with his "saltiness" almost completely depleted, he finally turned his heart back to God in repentance. We can read about his repentance in Psalm 51 and in Psalm 32.

God sent a prophet to tell David about his sin, and David listened and he followed the right path back to repentance and to forgiveness.

And yes, David did have to suffer through consequences for his sin, because, while God was, and is, merciful and forgiving, He is also just. His laws regarding sin are real and they are demanding. Listen to these words in Galatians 6.

⁷ Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap.

⁸ For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.

(Galatians 6:7-8)

Sin demands its due retribution. And while neither David nor you and I can actually pay the real penalty for our sins, there will usually be necessary forms of discipline that God will bring to us because of our sin.

As with David, discipline was necessary to restore him to his "saltiness" and to his position as a "man after God's own heart".

And while yes, Joseph's response of fleeing from sin is to be our very best example, David's response of repentance is to be our "next best" example.

And we are thankful that God made David's sin and his response public for us to see and to be an example and an instruction to us, because unfortunately, over the course of our own lifetime, sin will on many occasions sink its talons into our own souls and will bring us down to the pits, causing us to lose our "saltiness". And these are our answers.

Folks, whether from the words of these scriptures or from the public display of a fallen saint, God continually reminds us that sin does lurk behind every door, and satan does roam to and fro throughout the earth, seeking whom he may devour. We are pursued and attacked at every turn for the very purpose mentioned here in today's passage, to cause us to lose some, or even all, of the "saltiness" that Jesus put into our souls in our salvation.

And that is the reason why Jesus gave us this stern warning here in these words. Listen again!

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

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!" (Luke 14:34-35)

Over in Matthew chapter 5, Jesus called you and me, and all who believe, the "salt of the earth", salt put into us by the presence of the Spirit of Christ. But notice in these words also that He gave the very same warning against the possibility of losing our saltiness. Listen to these words given in Matthew chapter 5.

¹³ "You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet. (Matthew 5:13)

May I repeat myself and say again that this is a very serious and stern warning being given specifically to us as believing Christians? Yes, for much of the unbelieving world, immoral conduct such as the kind that King David was caught up in and also such as the kind that some of our current day fallen heroes have been caught up in are common and ordinary.

But folks listen . . . we must not allow such things to become common and ordinary to those of us who believe. We are to be different. We are to be "salt" and "light" to the rest of the world, shining examples for others to see and to taste and see that the Lord is good.

If we fall, if our light goes out, if we lose our saltiness, we not only hurt ourselves, we bring others down with us.

No, David did not, by his behavior, lose his salvation. And neither will those men that I mentioned a few moments ago, Tony Evans and Ravi Zacharias and Robert Morris, because those men have given a very credible testimony of their eternal salvation.

And because they are truly saved, the words of John chapter 10 will be true. Listen to those words in John chapter 10.

²⁷ My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸ I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. ²⁹ My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. ³⁰ I and the Father are one." (10:27-30)

But folks, while none of those men might suffer eternal damnation for their sin, the devastation left in the wake of their sinful behavior is still painful beyond measure.

And no, neither you nor I have the position or authority to condemn any of these men for their errant behavior. But we can know and must know that such behavior brings great dishonor upon God and it destroys other people's lives all along the way. And for that reason, we must recognize its sinfulness, and to the extent available to us, we must warn others away from those behaviors.

And again, as for you and me, as we are confronted daily with all the forms of sin that come our way, God really does want you and me to do as Joseph did and to flee from it. But if we fail at that first point, He does want us to be as King David and to come to a full confession and repentance. In 1 John 1:9 we read,
⁹ If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9)

But we must be warned. If we do not come to a complete surrender to our Lord for salvation and if we don't come to a full and complete confession and repentance for our sins, these words will probably eventually be the path that our life will take.

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³⁵ It is neither fit for the land nor for the dunghill, *but* men throw it out. (Luke 14:34-35)

When we find ourselves caught up in sin, you and I must be willing to humble ourselves and listen to the Spirit of God within us. His warning here tells us He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"

This is our only way out of our troubles folks. We must be willing to listen and to hear. We dare not let our sin carry us to the point that we are neither fit for the land nor for the dunghill.

God is a loving and a forgiving Father. If, when we find ourselves caught up in sin, we humble ourselves, confess our sins and turn back to Him, He will surely forgive us.

I want us to continue with these thoughts next week, but for now, let me leave us with these words. First our warning from Luke 14,

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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!" (Luke 14:34-35)

And from 1 John 1:9 we read,

⁹ If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9)

Let's pray.