



Is The Salt Losing Its Savor?

by the Rev. Archimandrite Fr. Eusebius Stephanou, Th.D.

This message was written by the late Father Stephanou in the early 1980's. It was before the downfall of the Soviet Union, but the article is just as relevant

today as when it had been originally penned. It is a convicting message which Father Stephanou had exhorted every Christian believer to take heed to.
Joseph Abbate

Christ called His followers “the salt of the earth.” He said: “*Ye are the salt of the earth*” (Matt. 5:13). Of course, the Lord is not speaking of natural, physical salt that is in common use in our homes. He is referring to the Church as the spiritual salt of the earth.

“Salt” is used by Christ as the symbol of the Church’s transforming influence on the world. It denotes the spiritual power of the Church. It signifies the supernatural impact the Church was intended by the Lord to have on the whole world.

If you are a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ, then normally you, as an individual, should be the spiritual salt of the earth. Collectively, all Christian believers who make up the Church are the salt of the earth in a spiritual sense.

Function of Spiritual Salt

Let’s just consider for a moment the properties natural salt has. Then it will be easier for us to understand the corresponding properties of salt in its spiritual sense. Salt is a potent substance and, because of its intrinsic potency, it is extremely useful in man’s life. It is not a food itself, but when added to the food

we eat it affects it in a positive and favorable way. It enhances the flavor of our food.

We usually use salt in our food to make it more tasteful and more palatable. Without salt our food can taste bland and unsavory. When the food in our dish tastes insipid we often push it away and find it unacceptable.

In the spiritual realm of things Christian believers make the world more spiritually palatable and acceptable to God. Did you know that because of the presence of Christians in the world God is less likely to act to bring ultimate condemnation upon this sinful and wayward world? He is more apt to put off the day of His wrath.

It is the presence of spiritual salt scattered throughout the world like grains of salt spread over our food that causes God to accept the world despite all its wickedness and rebellion. It is the spread of spiritual power released by Christians throughout the world that keeps God from unleashing His divine wrath against this sinful and adulterous generation. **It is the spiritual salt that permeates every segment of life that makes the world acceptable and tolerable in the sight of God.**

Abraham put the question to God pertaining to His plan for the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah: “*Wilt*

thou destroy the righteous with the wicked? Peradventure ten righteous shall be found there. And God said, I will not destroy it for ten’s sake” (Gen. 18:32).

It is the presence of the true people of God that restrains His resolve to bring destruction upon this rebellious world. The few genuine believers who are faithful to Jesus Christ are the spiritual salt of the earth.

Jesus once declared: “*O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I tolerate you?*” (Matt. 17:17). God could destroy this wicked world today and be totally justified for doing it. The abomination of spiritual adultery and faithlessness rises up to Him as a stench in His nostrils. He could very justly spew rebellious mankind out of His mouth (Rev. 3:16).

Postponing Judgement Day

Yet, God postpones that day of reckoning. It is the spiritual salt that causes the world (with all its wickedness) to be acceptable and spiritually palatable. He has not yet spewed humanity out of His mouth. That “great and dreadful day” lies in the future.

To be sure, the day of wrath is coming. The warning stands: “*I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot; I would thou were cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth*”.

It is not the normal Christians who are the salt of the earth – the ones that merely go through the motions of religion. Those professing Orthodox who straddle the fence and want to have

the best of both worlds will receive the same (if not greater) judgement as those in the unbelieving world.

Those who are only in a formal sense children of God and “children of the kingdom” will be cast out into outer darkness where there is grinding and gnashing of teeth. It is not your baptismal certificate that makes you the salt of the earth. It is your uncompromising faithfulness to Christ and perfect obedience to His word.

The salt of the earth are those believers who are zealous over the name and lordship of Jesus. It is the compromising spirit, on the other hand, that causes the salt to lose its savor.

It is going all the way for Christ and never begrudging the cost that makes the salt potent and effective. The potency of the salt lies in the perfect obedience of the few select who comprise the remnant people of God.

The holy zeal and enthusiasm of the genuine members of Christ’s body renders the salt potent and capable of doing its work of making the world at large tolerable before God. It is the salt of the earth that prolongs the patience and longsuffering of God.

A Spiritual Preservative

Salt has a further property. It is a preservative. In older times when refrigeration was unknown, perishable foods, and especially meat and fish, were kept in salt or brine to prevent them from spoiling.

When Jesus called His disciples and followers “the salt of the earth,” **He intended to affirm that they are the spiritual salt God uses to restrain the Devil’s process of spiritually and morally corrupting the world.**

True that ultimately Satan will flood the world with his evil influence. The closer we get to the day of the Lord’s return the more corrupt the world will become. Iniquity will increase and it will abound in the end-time (Matt. 24:12).

Moral decay will spread to a degree never before seen. Then will come the great and dreadful day of the Lord Who will execute final judgment and will punish the unrepentant sinners according to His absolute and perfect justice.

The genuine, Spirit-filled believers who will make up the remnant Church will be the “salt of the earth” which will serve to retard the process of spiritual and moral decay. This spiritual salt will slow down the satanic work of bringing total moral decadence to the world.

Because of their spiritual potency the born-again, Spirit-baptized believers will be used of God to restrain Satan’s operation that aims at bringing total moral putrefaction into society of all nations. Were it not for “the salt of the earth,” Satan would have been able to do a quicker work of morally corrupting the world. But, as it is, he has to follow God’s timetable. He cannot go ahead of God’s program for the close of the age.

Dear reader: if you know Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, remember you are part of “the salt of the earth.” Just think of it. God is using you to slow down the process of the moral decay of human society. That’s how important you are for the lord. You play a significant role in the program of God for these last days.

You serve an important purpose as the salt of the earth. You might not

even be conscious of it. Whether you are conscious of it or not, you are serving as the salt God uses to preserve the world from completely falling into total and complete moral disintegration and chaos.

Furthermore, it is because of you, dear reader, and other Christ-loving believers that God does not obliterate planet earth with fire. You serve as a spiritual preservative. But you also make this world (despite its wickedness) tolerable and spiritually palatable in the eyes of the Lord.

The Removal of the Salt

But once the salt is removed from the earth, then look out. Nothing will remain to restrain earth’s process of moral decay under Satan’s influence. Nothing will keep God from unleashing His divine wrath against this sinful world.

His remnant people will be taken out, just as Noah and his family were taken out. Once they entered the ark and the door was shut, nothing could keep God from bringing the flood upon the world. The removal of Noah and his family signaled the unleashing of God’s anger.

In the same way once the remnant Church is removed from the world with the return of Jesus, nothing will keep the divine wrath from being manifested. The Lord clearly foretold that the circumstances at His second coming will resemble the days of Noah: “*As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man*” (Luke 17:26).

The pattern that appeared in the days of Lot will be similar to the circumstances related to the return of Jesus Christ. “*Likewise also as it was in*

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the days of Lot.”

Once Lot and his family were removed from Sodom and Gomorrah, the “*Lord rained upon these cities brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven*” (Gen. 19:24). The Lord assured Lot: “*Haste thee, escape thither, for I cannot do anything till thou become thither.*” **God will not inflict ultimate judgment upon the world until His own are removed.**

Consequently, it is possible that the true believers will pass through the first half the Great Tribulation (including persecution and martyrdom). But they will not be on earth when the natural disasters come to pass during the second half of the seven-year Great Tribulation period. The scriptural evidence seems to be conclusive on this question.

Losing its Savor?

Salt is useful so long as it retains its potency. The duration of its usefulness can be cut short, if it were to lose its efficacy and become incapable of serving as a preservative and of making bland food taste more palatable.

In the same manner believers in Jesus Christ can lose their spiritual potency when they backslide and begin compromising with the world and its standards. They no longer are useful when they slip into disobedience. They no longer serve as a spiritual preservative. They become spiritually impotent and thus powerless to retard the moral corruption of society.

To the extent the Church loses its spiritual savor, to that same extent society around the Church declines morally and moral decay increases. Did you know, dear reader, that the Church in a backslidden state becomes responsible for the moral deterioration of the world in which it exists?

The more the Church loses its spiritual savor the sooner God is likely to unleash His wrath upon the world. The world becomes less acceptable and palatable to God.

The more extensive apostasy becomes in the Christian world, the more imminent becomes the great and dreadful day of the Lord. The tolerance that God has for the world lessens. His acceptance of the world diminishes. The period of His longsuffering becomes shortened.

Jesus said: “*If the salt loses its savor, with what shall it be salted?*” If the Church which was founded to be the hope of the world and the very instrument the Lord was to use to change the whole world, then He has no use for the Church and for believers that lose their savor. **If the Church itself needs saving, then truly the world is in real trouble.**

In earlier times worthless salt was thrown out on the streets for pedestrians to walk on. It is for this reason Christ said: “*If the salt lose its savor with what can it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but cast out and trodden under foot of men.*”

Believers who fall into conformity with the world and compromise the Gospel are of no use. He removes them from His household of faith. He surrenders them to the enemy of the faith and lets him do whatever he wants with them. They are abused, humiliated and literally trodden under the foot by the enemy.

From early centuries we can see how God makes good His warnings to the churches. In the Book of Revelation they are directed to the seven Churches of Asia Minor. However, they are recorded in order for every single Church to heed them. The warnings are in effect sent out to the entire world Church.

The Salt Cast Out

In 1922 all the Churches of Asia Minor were overrun by the Turks who plundered the places of worship and literally treaded under foot almost 2,000,000 Orthodox Greeks. The salt that lost its savor was cast out to be trodden under foot by the enemies. The impotent and backslidden Churches were

surrendered by God to the Turks. They were of no use to Him. Entire cities were put to the flames and temples of worship were destroyed by the Turks.

Will we ever learn? **God means business when He warns the Churches to repent and to return to their first love.** “*Remember from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and I will remove thy candlestick out of its place, except thou repent*” (Rev. 2:5).

The Asia Minor disaster of 1922 did not demonstrate that the Churches in the area were among the most apostate in the Christian world. The Lord was simply trying to tell the rest of Christendom: “*Unless ye repent, ye shall likewise perish.*” The same divine judgment will fall upon you, unless you change your ways and return to Christ in perfect obedience.

The invasion of Cyprus by the Turks that occurred recently is a further example of what God does to the Church when it loses its spiritual savor and becomes impotent and useless. He casts it out, like worthless salt, and lets the enemy tread upon it.

One-third of Cyprus was occupied by the Turks and every Orthodox Greek driven out. Men, women and children were killed in cold blood. Personal property including homes and business establishments were seized and Church buildings plundered.

In effect the Cyprus episode was a continuation of the Asia Minor Disaster. The salt continues to lose its savor. It continues to be cast out and trodden under foot of enemy men.

Why don't we get the message? Can't we hear God trying to tell us something? Will we ever awaken and take His warnings seriously?

Doesn't history teach us anything? Must we repeat the sins of our fathers and forefathers?

The Patriarchate in Constanti-

nople including the faithful and the Churches and other institutions continues to be trodden under foot of enemy men. Can the decline of the ecumenical patriarchate simply be fortuitous? Is it to be taken casually?

The Cypriots and those in Constantinople are not worse sinners than those in other parts of world Orthodoxy. But God is trying to tell the rest of us: "Unless ye repent, ye shall likewise perish." Are we listening or have we hardened our hearts? How much longer will God put up with us?

The Bolshevik revolution of 1917 in Russia is a case in point. Obviously, Russia was not as holy as she was reputed to be ("Holy Russia"). The Church lost its spiritual saltiness. The failures of the Church and her close alliance with the state in committing iniquity and unrighteousness of every description are known only too well. All stirrings of spiritual renewal had been stamped out. Prophetic voices had been silenced.

Trodden Under Foot

The Church of Russia continues to be trodden under foot of the atheist Bolsheviks. They delight in treading upon everything sacred and holy. They revel in stepping contemptuously upon everything godly that the historic Church proclaims. They find joy in showing contempt for Christian believers and in torturing them and abusing them.

The Lord makes good His warning: "If the salt loses its savor, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but cast out and trodden under foot of men."

The Lord said: "*I will speak and the word that I shall speak shall come to pass. It shall be no more prolonged, for in your days, O rebellious house, will I say the word, and will perform it, saith the Lord God. The word which I have spoken shall be done, saith the Lord God*" (Ezekiel 12:25).

What can we say about Christ's promise that the "gates of hell will not

prevail against the Church?" At one time I considered it blasphemy to call the Church "dead." Then I realized that the Lord Himself called the Church "dead" in His indictment against her: "*I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead*" (Rev. 3:1).

It became clear to me that the Lord always works with a remnant, just as He did with His people in the Old Covenant. The Church can never be obliterated in the world as a whole, but history demonstrates that it can be obliterated in a given locality, as I indicated above.

The apostasia or "falling away" from the faith in the midst of the Christian world, predicted by St. Paul, is part of the growing spiritual and moral darkness. Satan is to do a work inside the Church, as well as in the world at large. It is an eschatological reality. We live in the age of fulfillment.

It comes as a shocking awareness to think that Satan can exert such influence over the Church. But it is true, because it is a divinely revealed truth affirmed in Scripture: the salt will lose its savor progressively as the day of Christ's appearance approaches. St. Paul put it very clearly: "*Let no man deceive you by any means, for that day shall not come, except there come an apostasia (falling away) first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition*" (2 Thess. 2:3).

Good for Nothing

The institutional Church will have less and less spiritual impact on the unregenerate world around her, as the close of the age draws near. At the end she will finally be "good for nothing" (to use the scriptural phrase) and men will tread upon her. Her enemies will scorn her and show contempt for her. There is something definitely eschatological about the words of Jesus: "*Ye are the salt of the earth, but if the salt have lost its savor, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to cast out, and to be trodden*

under foot of men." Perhaps the most devastating reversals Orthodoxy has sustained in all of its history are those of the present century: the rise of Communism in formerly Orthodox nations, the Asia Minor Disaster, the crisis in Cyprus and the decline of the ancient patriarchates.

Neither Communism nor Turkey (Islam in general) is our real foe. They are simply instruments of divine wrath. We are dealing with the wrong enemies when we work up a lot of steam to denounce Turkey or Communism. That is mischanneled energy. It is misdirected zeal.

I know I am going to make a lot of Greeks and Russians mad, but I have to say it. To turn against the Turks and the Communists rather than to repent and fall prostrate on our faces before the Lord of hosts in contrition is to provoke still further the wrath of God; it is a tantamount to inviting further disaster.

Our anger should be vented against our real enemy: Satan. Our hatred should be directed against the demons that seek to rob us of our spiritual, as well as our physical freedom. We should agree with the Psalmist who says: "*Do not I hate them, O Lord that hate Thee? I hate them with perfect hatred; I count them mine enemies*" (Ps. 139:21).

An Hour of Decision

It is the hour to decide what seal you will receive: that of Christ or the one of the Antichrist. Will it be the baptism in the Holy Spirit or will it be the mark of the beast?

His forgiving grace is still available to you, dear reader. There is still time to be washed in the Blood of the Lamb, the Lord Jesus Christ Who died for your sins.

When the Lord appears it will be too late. That will be the hour – not of grace, but of judgement. Your eternal welfare is at stake. Why take a chance and end up in the unquenchable fire of Hell, when all the while eternal life is offered to you?