# Mark - Commentaries by Edward B. Dennett

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"For every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt. Salt is good: but if the salt have lost its saltiness, wherewith will ye season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another." Mark 9:49, 50.

The general meaning of this somewhat difficult scripture is soon apprehended. It was no longer a question now of following a Messiah on earth, or of the present establishment of His kingdom. Christ was in fact already rejected, and the cross was in full prospect. (See vv. 9-11; 30-32.) Rejection, therefore, would be the portion of His disciples; and, consequently, the constant and unsparing application of the cross. Everything was to be sacrificed rather than lose entry "into life," and incur the penalty of "the fire that never shall be quenched." It was thus eternity that was now in view, instead of the glory of Messiah's kingdom on earth; and hence there was no alternative between eternal gain and eternal loss. This will account for the distinction between the two clauses of verse 49—the first comprises all men, the second only the true followers of Christ. "Every one"—there is no exception—"shall be salted with fire." That is to say, God will test, and search in order to test, every soul of man by His holiness as applied in judgment; for it is of this that fire is a symbol.

Even Christ Himself was so tested, as shown out in the holy fire that fed upon the sacrifices offered to God under the old dispensation. The effect for the sinner will be the eternal fire, while for the believer who is in Christ nothing is lost save the dross. But whether for the saint or the sinner the standard is the same; the former finds the answer to it in Christ, the latter being without Christ will perish. Then second, "Every sacrifice shall be salted with salt." None but real disciples of Christ are here contemplated, their lives being looked upon as a sacrifice to God. (Compare Eph. 5:1, 2; Phil. 2:17.) This will be the more readily seen if it is recalled, that it is especially in connection with the meat offering, type of the perfect devotedness of Christ to the glory of God in all His pathway (including, no doubt, His death, as in Phil. 2), that salt is mentioned. Now, salt is the energy of grace in the soul, linking it in all its activities with God, and preserving it from the contamination of evil. To borrow words: "Salt is not the gentleness that pleases (which grace produces, without doubt), but that energy of God within us which connects everything in us with God, and dedicates the heart to Him, binding it to Him in the sense of obligation and of desire, rejecting all in oneself that is contrary to Him.... Thus, practically, it was distinctive grace, the energy of holiness, which separates from all evil, but by setting apart for God." A life without the "salt" would degenerate into human grace and amiability, and would thus be characterized by "honey"—that which was absolutely forbidden "in any offering of the LORD made by fire" (Lev. 2:11).

"We are next told that "salt is good"; that is, the condition of soul which is produced by the energy of grace. The activity of grace within begets a state corresponding to its character. (See 2 Tim. 2:1.) But if the salt, through the lack of watchfulness and of self-judgment, have lost its saltiness, wherewith shall ye season it? "It is used for seasoning other things; but if the salt needs it for itself, there is nothing left that can salt it." When we have lost devotedness to God, together with our Nazariteship, separation from evil, our state is hopeless, unless indeed God once more comes in with His powerful grace to restore the soul. The remedy against the danger is to have salt in ourselves, and to have peace one with another. The more we cultivate true holiness, the more we are apart from all evil, the more we shall be in peace with our fellow-Christians; for it is then that the Spirit of God, being ungrieved, works mightily in us, and enables us also to use all diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace.