

“And whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea. And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into Hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into Hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into Hell fire; where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. For every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt. Salt is good; but if the salt has lost his saltness, wherewith will ye season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another.” (Mark 9:42-50.)

Salt is good, to make meat savory, and keep flesh from corrupting; and so is the grace of God; they are good and useful to others, both by their words and actions, and especially ministers of the Gospel, who are the salt of the earth (supposedly). And here Christ may chiefly intend His apostles. But if the salt hath lost its saltness, wherewith shall ye season it? There's no recovering it. It becomes good for nothing. Have salt in yourselves; the doctrine of Grace; the word of truth; have prudence. And peace one with another.

Salt is an emblem of firm union, concord, and agreement. Hence, the covenant of peace is called the covenant of salt. See: **Numbers 18:19** compared with **Numbers 25:12**. This exhortation very appositely follows the making mention of salt in different senses; especially was the more necessary to the disciples at this time, since they had been very lately warmly disputing the point among themselves as to who should be the greatest in the kingdom of Messiah; and, which had occasioned this discourse of the Lord Jesus Christ's.

“Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. (Matt. 5:13)

This is to be understood of the disciples and apostles of Christ; who might be compared to salt, because of the savoury doctrines they preach; as all such are, which are agreeable to the Scriptures, and are of the evangelic kind, which are full of Christ, serve to exalt him, and to magnify the grace of God; and are suitable to the experiences of the saints, and are according to godliness and tend to promote it: also because of their savoury lives and conversations; whereby they recommended, and gave sanction to the doctrines they preached, were examples to the saints, and checks upon wicked men.

These were the salt of the earth; that is, of the inhabitants of the earth, not of the land of Judea only, where they first lived and preached, but of the whole world into which they were afterwards sent to preach the Gospel. But if the salt have lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted? The savour here suggested that it may be lost, cannot mean the savour of grace, or true grace itself, which cannot be lost, being an incorruptible seed; but either gifts qualifying men for the ministry, which may cease; or the savoury doctrines of the Gospel, which may be departed from; or a seeming savoury conversation, which may be neglected; or that seeming savour, zeal, and affection, with which the Gospel is preached, which may be dropped.

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Note, particularly respect seems to be paid to Judas, whom Christ had chosen to the apostleship, and he was a devil. Christ knew he would lose his usefulness and place, and become an unprofitable wretch, and at last be rejected of God and men. This case is proposed to them all, in order to engage them to take heed to themselves, their doctrine and their ministry. Moreover, this is but a supposition; ...if the salt should lose it's savour...it proves no matter of fact. The Jews have a saying that "*all that season lose their savour...*" however, salt does not lose it's savour. But should it do so, it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out and to be trodden under foot. Salt is good for nothing, but to make things savoury, and preserve from putrefaction; and when it has lost its savour, it is of no use, neither to men nor beasts, as some things are when corrupted; nor is it of any use to the land. No, not even to the dunghill, for it makes barren, and not fruitful. Likewise ministers of the word, when they have dropped the savoury doctrines of the Gospel, or have quitted their former seemingly savoury and exemplary conversations; their usefulness is gone, and generally speaking, it is never retrieved. They are cast out of the churches of Christ, the candlesticks are gone, and they are treated with contempt by everyone.

Maybe the best way to demonstrate what it means for the Gospel ministry of the United States to lose its savour is to present examples of the genuine Gospel preaching and their sermons reaching back three or four generations; to wit: Dr. Bob Jones and Dr. Elbert Munsey – two fiery Methodist preachers who never lost their savour. Dr. John R. Rice gave this quasi-biography: William Elbert Munsey was born July 13, 1833, at Giles (now Bland Co.), Virginia. His father and his grandfather were both Methodist preachers, and his was a devout but poverty stricken family. His father died when William was 12 years old, and the young farm boy took over the support of his mother and the five younger children.

There were early signs that William Munsey had been endowed with an unusual intellect. At five he was called upon frequently to read the Scripture and political speeches in public. At ten, we are told, he had read the works of the Jewish historian, Josephus, several times. He studied everywhere and always, though he had only twelve months of formal schooling by the time he was fourteen years old. While plowing he would prop a book up at the end of the furrow, read a section, and then leave the book and fix in his mind what he had read while he plowed the next furrow. At the age of 17 Munsey was converted at a Methodist camp meeting. He became a country school teacher in Virginia, was licensed to preach, and in 1856 began preaching at Holston Conference, M.E. Church South at Knoxville.

In 1860 he married Miss Virginia A. Blair at Jonesboro, Tennessee. From 1856 to 1865 he filled Methodist pastorates in Tennessee (Chattanooga, Knoxville, Abingdon, and Bristol). In 1865 he was transferred to the Baltimore Conference, and stationed in Alexandria. It was during this charge and his next one that his fame as an orator became so widespread. For two years he was Secretary of Foreign Missions, and in 1870 returned to Baltimore for a two-year period. In 1871 he was temporarily retired to Jonesboro to regain his health, and he spent the next two years lecturing and traveling and preaching. However, he never did fully regain his health and though he was for fourteen months pastor after this at New Orleans, he was ill and in such nervous difficulties he was not able to preach much of the time. On October 3, 1877, he died at Jonesboro, Tennessee. Munsey was a very intense man; he considered no time as necessary for eating or sleeping. He was a careful craftsman. Sometimes after a one or two-hour sermon on Sunday he would go home to work over and improve every word of it. At other times the intense mental strain and physical exhaustion after two Sunday services would be so great that he would be unable to sleep for two or three nights afterwards.

All his life Munsey read copiously; he learned anatomy, logic, mythology, music and history. People flocked to hear him. In Richmond, the house was filled often two hours before the service. At Alexandria, he attracted immense congregations. He attained such a reputation that he literally burned out trying to live up to it. One who knew him writes that he had almost every disadvantage a man could have. He was not attractive physically; he was long and gaunt so that *“even the newest clothes hung on him without fitting at all.”* His face was shallow and bloodless, one said, and his voice was without the slightest trace of oratorical power.

Yet this man – tall, rapid, ungraceful, looking always as if he had just been called out of a twelve-acre field – this man heralded as *“the most eloquent pulpit orator in the South”* by the Knoxville Tribune, at his death. Sensitive, nervous, personally unattractive, Munsey’s wonderful genius and his unrivalled power of word-painting held vast audiences in breathless suspense for hours together. Munsey was orthodox; he was exceptionally gifted in logic insight and in soaring, brilliant, and descriptive speaking, and he had remarkable audience control. He was one of the outstanding Methodist preachers of his time, in a generation of great Methodist preachers. Dr. Bob Jones in his Introduction to *Eternal Retribution* by Elbert Munsey said:

“Before I was fifteen years old, I was a licensed minister of the gospel and was preaching all over Southeast Alabama. I, of course, was not a great preacher. I, however, had heard some great preachers. These preachers lived in the country, and most of them were pastors of country churches...not well educated...making mistakes in their English; but, believe me, they could preach. A few of the greatest sermons I have ever heard were preached by these plain countrymen. They often speak about having heard or read sermons of certain great preachers, declaring these sermons stimulated them to preach. When I entered college, I was familiar with the names of the leading preachers of America, and I regret to say there were more great preachers then than there are today. I say that from the standpoint of great preaching, they excelled the men in the pulpits of America at this time. When I was a young preacher, preaching meant hardships and sacrifices, but men did not have to be coaxed to enter the ministry. They entered the ministry because they had a feeling ‘Woe is me if I preach not the gospel.’ One old country preacher said to me, ‘Son, if you can keep from preaching, you are not fit to preach.’ This nation needs a great preaching crusade. Fifty Jonathan Edwardses properly distributed in America could turn back the tide of juvenile delinquency and the tide of moral decay that are sweeping over our land.”

An excerpt of Jonathan Edwards’ sermon “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God.” would be instructive for us to understand what the preaching was:

“The wrath of God is like great waters that are dammed for the present; they increase more and more and rise higher and higher, till an outlet is given; and the longer the stream is stopped, the more rapid and mighty is its course when once it is let loose. ‘Tis true that judgment against your evil work has not been executed hitherto; the floods of God’s vengeance have been withheld; but your guilt in the meantime is constantly increasing, and you are every day treasuring up more wrath; the waters are continually rising and there is nothing but the mere pleasure of God that holds the waters back, that are unwilling to be stopped, and press hard to go forward. If God should only withdraw his hand from the floodgate, it would immediately fly open, and the fiery floods of the

fierceness and wrath of God, would rush forth with inconceivable fury, and would come upon you with omnipotent power; and if your strength were ten thousand times greater than it is, yea, ten thousand times greater than the strength of the stoutest, sturdiest devil in hell, it would be nothing to withstand or endure it. The bow of God's wrath is bent, and the arrow made ready on the string, and justice bends the arrow at your heart, and strains the bow, and it is nothing but the mere pleasure of God, and that of an angry God, without any promise or obligation at all, that keeps the arrow one moment from being made drunk with your blood. Thus are all you that never passed under a great change of heart by the mighty power of the Spirit of God upon your souls; all that were never born again, and made new creatures, and raised from being dead in sin to a state of new and before altogether inexperienced light and life (however you may have reformed your life in many things, and may have had religious affections, and may keep up a form of religion in your families and closets and in the house of God, and may be strict in it), you are thus in the hand of an angry God; 'tis nothing but his mere pleasure that keeps you from being this moment swallowed up in everlasting destruction. However unconvinced you may now be of the truth of what you hear, by and by you will be fully convinced of it. Those that are gone from being in the like circumstances with you, see that it was so with them; for destruction came suddenly upon most of them; when they expected nothing of it, and while they were saying, Peace and Safety. Now they see that those things on which they depended for peace and safety were nothing but thin air and empty shadows. The God that holds you over the pit of hell much as one holds a spider or some loathsome insect over the fire, abhors you, and is dreadfully provoked; his wrath towards you burns like fire; he looks upon you as worthy of nothing else but to be cast into the fire; he is of purer eyes than to bear to have you in his sight; you are ten thousand times so abominable in his eyes as the most hateful and venomous serpent is in ours. You have offended him infinitely more than ever a stubborn rebel did his prince; and yet it is nothing but his hand that holds you from falling into the fire every moment. 'Tis ascribed to nothing else, that you did not go to hell the last night; that you was suffered to awake again in this world after you closed your eyes to sleep and there is no other reason to be given why you have not gone to hell since you have sat here in the house of God, provoking his pure eyes by your sinful wicked manner of attending his solemn worship. Yea, there is nothing else that is to be given as a reason why you do not this very moment drop down into hell. O sinner! Consider the fearful danger you are in. 'Tis a great furnace of wrath, a wide and bottomless pit, full of the fire of wrath, that you are held over in the hand of that God whose wrath is provoked and incensed as much against you as against many of the damned in hell. You hang by a slender thread, with the flames of divine wrath flashing about it, and ready every moment to singe it and burn it asunder; and you have no interest in any Mediator, and nothing to lay hold of to save yourself, nothing to keep off the flames of wrath, nothing of your own, nothing that you ever have done, nothing that you can do, to induce God to spare you one moment..."

Jonathan Edwards had a brother-in-law who was a lawyer. After listening to one of Jonathan Edwards' sermons, his brother-in-law ate some cheese and committed suicide.

I love you. Amen.