

We can't miss the fact that too many live with fear, frustration, and anger. It could be related to jobs, illness, family, money, parenting, or death. Even for people of faith, this can quickly lead to a spiritual crisis as well – a crisis of faith. We all know what we believe, but when our belief doesn't change the world around us, we can be overwhelmed by anger, fears, or crisis. And a spiritual crisis can season how we live with tastes that range from sour to bitter. In such moments there is a temptation to cry out that God doesn't hear prayer.

We know the world we live in is God's gift. We believe his love is so powerful he embraced our flesh in the person of Jesus and conquered the darkness of death. His gifts are undeserved and full of love. Is the seasoning of such a love enough to overwhelm our occasional or chronic crises of faith? Will we complain and get angry, or will we continue to be comfortable believing what we believe and living as we are called to live? In other words, are we changed by the world around us, or changed by the blessings of God? What is the flavor of your day? What does life taste like? What seasons your living?

There is nothing we face that has not been faced before. There are instances of abuse, greed, selfishness, hatred, prejudice in every community and time of history. Should we focus only on what is broken, we will never be free to live with the peace which comes from faith.

*Ecclesiastes reminds, "There is nothing new under the sun." Life has always been complicated, even for those who were willing to stand up and be bold in their faith. Numbers relates how 70 elders were given responsibility to help Moses but complained because others dared to help as well. Even Jesus' disciples were jealous when "outsiders" dared carry out the work that was so special for them.*

God's response, whether from the prophets or from Jesus is consistent. His love doesn't come in different levels or flavors; it is the same for all. It isn't based on any inside track; it is pure, unadulterated grace.

When I barbecue, I like to rub a combination of spices on meat before putting it on the grill. Such seasonings change the flavor of whatever they touch. And for people of faith, our challenge is to let the seasoning of Jesus' love change the flavor of how we live!

Jesus used a wonderful metaphor in the image of being salted with fire. Salt was a valuable commodity because of how it was used. It changed the flavor of everything it touched. It preserved meat and kept it from spoiling. But if not used or cared for is wasted, ruined, and has no value. It is no different for discipleship and faith, which change anything they touch, but are wasted if they are not used.

When you add the image of fire (with its destructive nature that changes everything it touches) the metaphor of being “salted with fire” brings a more powerful image. Whatever we face in life, whether as welcome as salt or destructive as fire will change us, but faith changes any such moment and makes it an opportunity for service – or for faith to shine!

*Israel hated the desert, but forty years of serpents and sand dunes seasoned them for a lifetime with God. Disciples didn't always appreciate Jesus' classroom lessons but were seasoned for the work that lay ahead. We often are disturbed by trials and tribulations, but faith flavors those moments and gives them value for what comes next. This is the spiritual seasoning that Jesus promised. And it alone can change the flavor of each day.*

We can complain about the brokenness of life or celebrate that Jesus' life, death, and resurrection are stronger seasonings than human traditions or attempts to explain God. Each has the potential of faith, but if it is rejected that is no different than pouring water on salt and complaining that it has lost its taste. And whether good or bad, deserved or not, the gift of faith, like salt or fire, makes everything it touches into something blessed and new.

One never knows the results of faith, and yet it is like planting seeds. We don't know how it works but a harvest always results. Remember what the Psalm writer proclaimed: “*This is day Lord has made! Rejoice and be glad!*” What are we waiting for? Why would we complain? Why would we take God for granted? It is simply time to become what God has seasoned and freed us to be!

God always moves forward and reaches out – there are always second chances and always the gift of life with God. A manger, a cross, and an empty tomb change us and the world, touching every moment, blessing, disappointment, and hope with the gift of grace and undeserved love.

So then, what does that mean for HOW we live? Do we complain or celebrate? Curse the darkness or shine the light of Christ's love. Think of what it means for YOU, at school, at the voting booth, at work, at play, with your children or your parents to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world. For that is what God has seasoned YOU to be!

When Abby was 5, we had one of those little bicycle trailers to pull her behind us. One evening when I came home, she came to the door and had taken the fiberglass pole with the flag on it off the trailer. She handed it to me and asked if I would stick it in the ground in the back yard. I asked her "why?" She said, "To remind us of Jesus." Now that didn't make any sense, but I knew better than to argue with a 5-year-old and followed through on what she asked.

And you know what? Every time I saw that flag, I thought about Jesus.

When are the times when the seasoning of Jesus has touched difficult moments in your life or been shared with you by other people of faith? And when, to your surprise, were you inspired to do the same for someone else? It is always a humbling moment when God touches, and his love brings change.

When life isn't fair what will you do -- complain or be seasoned? When life is fair what will you do -- take it for granted or let His light shine? Don't waste your gifts or your opportunities. *"Have salt in yourselves and be at peace with each other."* Yes, you!