



# **Oak Grove Church of Christ Newsletter - 2023.08.06**

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## **Sermon recordings**

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**Speaker-AM: Steve Helterbrand**

**Title:**

**Recording:**

No Recording Available

**Speaker-PM: Patrick Hite**

**Title: Being A Pilgrim**

**Recording:**

[oakgrovecofc.org/sermons/being-a-pilgrim/](https://oakgrovecofc.org/sermons/being-a-pilgrim/)

### Tempted and Tried, 7/14/2023 by Perry Hall

*"For everyone will be salted with fire. Salt is good; but if the salt becomes unsalty, with what will you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another" ([Mark 9:49-50](#)).*

"Salted with fire" ([Mark 9:49](#)) is a notoriously hard saying of Jesus. Context can help. Before this difficult text ([Mark 9:42-50](#)), there is a scene whose imagery lends the metaphors of fire and water. A demon-possessed son is being tossed into the water and fire ([Mark 9:22](#)). The father asks Jesus to have compassion for his son. Compassion will be exhibited by Jesus destroying that which is destroying the father's son. Salt is the compassion of peace.

Salted with fire is a sacrificial term ([Leviticus 2:13](#)). Sacrifices are holy when given up to God. Here though, we can become our own sacrifice by giving in to our desires. Then, we are simply destroying ourselves and those among us. When we examine our lives, are we sacrificing others or our desires and ourselves?

"Salted with fire" means everyone will destroy something in their lives here and now. For those who are godly, it is through testing and triumphing over temptation. Trials are good when they are endured for the purpose of destroying the evil within ourselves. However, once the situation turns to evil, how can we turn it back again? By giving in, we have turned the testing into temptation and destroyed one another.

We need to have salt among ourselves, meaning preserving the good within us. Here Jesus is switching the metaphor from salted with fire where salt is a verb, to salt as a noun and preserver. The connection between this switch in metaphor is we are to destroy with fire the evil within us, then we can have peace in ourselves and with one another. Notice how this conclusion is the opposite of how this section begins: *"But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to fall away ..."* ([Mark 9:42](#)).

Destroy what is in you so that you don't destroy others. Destroy inwardly so you can have peace from compassion with others.

## Which Apostle Had It the Easiest? 07/26/2023 by Perry Hall

Which apostle had it the easiest? James. That answer may be surprising. Even more surprising is why and how.

In Acts 12, James is martyred first among the apostles. Some may question God's fairness, and may even complain, "Why did God allow James to die but allowed Peter to live?" Considering the church was praying for Peter, we can assume they were praying for James too (Acts 12:5). So..."Why did God answer their prayer for Peter but not James?"

Such questions are myopic. We assume what the church was praying for. The early church could have been interceding on behalf of James and Peter in the same unexpected way wherein God answered their prayers with an astounding "yes!" Instead of their release, they could have been praying for James and Peter's strength. They could have been praying for their spiritual safety over their physical safety. Are we too focused on freedom over faithfulness? Is our perception of ease too worldly?

One could say that James' mother had her "prayer" answered, but in a way unexpected. She demanded of Jesus, "Promise," she said to him, "that these two sons of mine may sit, one on your right and the other on your left, in your kingdom" (Matthew 20:20-21). Jesus responded such was not his to give. However, all believers who overcome, though death, sit on the throne with Jesus (Revelation 3:21). James's mother had her prayer answered but in a way never expected. Be careful what you pray for! Answering prayers is God's way of surprising us. When James overcame, though death, he began to sit on Jesus's throne with him! Surprise!

After James was beheaded, he entered into eternal peace first among the apostles. So, which apostle has been the safest and the longest from all harm? Which apostle suffered less than the others? Which apostle has enjoyed the Father's presence the longest? Which apostle was first with Jesus on His throne? James.

Why did James have it the easiest? God allowed James to die. Sitting beside Jesus in eternity, do you think he was complaining about God being unfair? No. Who has enjoyed the ease of peace longer than any of the apostles? James.